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THE

NATURE, EXTENT, AND PROVINCE

OF

HUMAN REASON,

CONSIDERED.

.....

Σκοπει αν, μη το Φως το εν Σοι, σκοτος εστιν.

Ει γαρ το Φως το εν σοι, σκοτος εστι, το σκοτος ποσον.

.....

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DEDICATION.

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND,

SAMUEL,

LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID's.

MY LORD,

THE appearance of the following pages, in their preſent form, originates from ſome incidental converſation, in a ſmall circle of friends to *Revealed Religion*, *Philoſophic Truth*, and *Sound Learning*; a con-

verſation, of which your Lordſhip's late CHARGE was the valuable occaſion and ſource.

To Minds, whoſe attachment to the SACRED SCRIPTURES is ſomething more than national, or profeſſional; which *feel*, what they admire, and eſteem; the departure of the times, from the obvious principles of divine Revelation, has long been a matter of ſincere, and, it is hoped, of benevolent ſenſibility; a ſenſibility, which they would be ready, and which indeed they ought, to diſavow, were they not perſuaded, that it is founded on the *Venuſtum*, the *Honeſtum*, the *Decorum* of things. But, in the manly zeal, in the

the liberal firmneſs, in the extenſive erudition, and in the evangelical truths, which they conceive to be diſplayed in the above Charge, the almoſt deſpairing cauſe of *genuine*, *apoſtolical Chriſtianity*, begins to revive.

Very cheerfully do we ſubſcribe to the ſentiments of a noble author, when he tells us, that, " In what form or manner ſoever *Criticiſm* may appear among us, or *Critics*, chuſe to exerciſe their talents, it can become none, beſides the groſsly ſuperſtitious or ignorant, to be alarmed at this *Spirit*, ſo long as it regards the rules of *Decency*. For, from the conſideration of antient, as well

well as modern times, it appears, that the cauſe, and intereſt, of Critics, is the ſame with that of Wit, Learning, and good Senſe."

Under this conviction, we deprecate the *ſeverity* of the faſtidious reader; we ſolicit the *candour* of thoſe, whoſe purſuit is *things*, not *ſounds*. Our appeal is, to the underſtanding and the heart. Elegance of compoſition, we profeſs to admire — Taſte, we approve — but *TRUTH* is our *ultimatum*. Let *That* be ſecure, and let Folly, let Sophiſtry, let Falſhood be detected and expoſed.

But, whatever may be the deference and reſpect moſt juſtly due,

and

and which we are moſt willing to render to the united efforts of a ſet of gentlemen, who have engaged in the arduous and beneficial office of *Reviewers*; whom we may very properly conſider as forming a ſort of *Literary Phalanx*; and whoſe judgments, we could wiſh, for the ſake of Truth and Piety, were as *impartial*, as they are able, we are ſtill of opinion with your Lordſhip, that,

"Religion and Science are very different things; and the objects of different faculties. Science is the object of natural Reaſon; religious Truth, of Faith. Faith, like the natural faculties, may be improved by

by exercise, but, in its beginning, it is unquestionably a distinct gift of God*."—

If *Faith*, in the general idea of it, be considered, as the unreserved submission or surrender of the understanding and heart to the *revealed Will of God*--it certainly must be considered, as a kind of faculty, entirely distinct from what is universally meant by *human Reason*. Because, it seems to be the peculiar property, the province, it *may* be a moral excellency of Faith, in its relation to the Divine Being, cordially to receive *that*, upon the divine testi-

* 1 Cor. ii. Eph. ii. 8.

mony

mony alone, *the reaſon* of which it cannot at preſent diſcover. It may be one of the higheſt exerciſes of true goodneſs, to ſay, in this caſe, of the ſupreme Governor of the world, *Stat pro ratione, voluntas*; the Will of God being the firſt cauſe, and eternal baſis, of all moral obligation.

As to the objection, hereafter ſufficiently diſcuſſed, as if, upon *this* principle, the moral Governor of the univerſe was a mere *arbitrary Being* —we need only remark in this place, that, " A Being, of *infinite* freedom and independency, muſt neceſſarily act according to his own ſovereign will and pleaſure. If every thing received

received its exiſtence from him; if every thing, which exiſts, be the effect of his Will, and he can do nothing, but *becauſe* he wills it, muſt he not be as *arbitrary*, as he is *powerful?* And, though *Will* and *Power*, when conſidered as blind or imperfect faculties in man, may paſs for *humour* and *caprice*, yet, as attributes of God, they muſt have the *perfection* of God. And, if the Will of God be in the higheſt ſtate of perfection, *as ſuch*, then, we have the higheſt reaſon to love and adore him, *becauſe* he is *arbitrary*---becauſe he acts according to his own *independent* and *all-perfect Will*.—

Nothing

Nothing can be more evident, my Lord, to thoſe who are in the habit of *reflecting*, and *diſcriminating* between true and falſe, ſpecious and real, than that, as there have been ſeveral things, which have not had the eſſence of *Virtue* in them, which have nevertheleſs been miſtaken for virtue--there are ſeveral things, which have been miſtaken for *Reaſon*, which are as far from the thing itſelf, as Scepticiſm is from the moſt eſtabliſhed axioms; or, as the date of the Chineſe empire, from forty thouſand years.

It has been very much the faſhion in all our modern productions, which have the moſt diſtant reference to

Religion, to denominate the preſent age, *The Age of Reaſon*; and to panegyrize it, as ſuperlatively diſtinguiſhable for *Liberality of ſentiment*. That it may be *The Age of reaſoning Pride*, we will not diſpute. And, inaſmuch as it has been ſaid, to have the ſtrong outline of *Liberality of Sentiment*, we are perfectly agreed with your Lordſhip, that, in this equivocal and undefinable phraſe, "A *profane indifference* is made to paſs for an *accompliſhment*."

Will your Lordſhip permit us, for the ſake of *good humour*, which, we apprehend, is no enemy to true religion, to introduce here a little anecdote, in alluſion to your own idea?

idea? The Poliſh hiſtorians record, that, after the death of *Stephen*, one of the braveſt of their kings, there came ambaſſadors to *Poland*, from the *Cham of Tartary*, who was a candidate for the Crown. They had inſtructions to repreſent to the *Dyet*, "That the *Cham* was a Prince of great power; and that, as to his perſonal qualities, he was temperate and ſober. That, being informed there were differences among them about *Religion*, he gave them aſſurances, that *their Pope ſhould be his Pope*, and *their Luther be his Luther*, juſt as they pleaſed to determine."

To *Liberality of Sentiment*, very closely in alliance with this, and to uncommon pretensions to superior *Reason*, we are much indebted for the repeated and various attempts, which have been made upon our civil and ecclesiastical constitution. By one of *their* disciples, who announces himself the humble echo of a modern Heresiarch and restless Sectary, your Lordship was, not long since, addressed in the following remarkable style:

" I wish it could be uttered with a voice, that would penetrate every corner of the nation, and that could rouse *the people* of Britain *to rise* as one man, to *require* that the public service

ſervice of Religion be cleanſed from theſe pollutions," [*meaning the doctrinal Articles of our Church*] "which preſs hard on the conſciences of the moſt worthy among the clergy,---which drive many to infidelity---which render others indifferent to Religion---and which keep from the Church, members, whoſe talents, and whoſe weight of character, would render it eminent ſervice."---Whenever the ſtate of the Church ſhall *really need* their aſſiſtance, it will be very proper, no doubt, to ſacrifice *both* for the benefit of *ſuch* talents, and *ſuch* characters.—Till then, ſo long as the Public is inſulted with ſuch outrageous and inflammatory effuſions as theſe, it will be impoſ-

ſible

ſible for them to forget the comic wit of an *Hudibras*, or the leſs tempered ſatire of *The Tale of a Tub*.

We have ſeen, that, if your Lordſhip ſtep forward to aſſert the fundamental principles of Revelation—*the eſſential Deity of the Saviour*—*the Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith*—*and the Neceſſity of the Divine Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit*, it is aſcribed, by a certain deſcription of Perſons, to *motives* the moſt diſingenuous and irreputable. If your Lordſhip enforce upon your Clergy the expediency of an *avowed*, *honeſt*, and *ſteady* adherence to the national Church, it is to be charged with the odious names of *Bigotry* and *Perſecution*. And, if the effrontery of

its

its opponents be repelled with the contempt it provokes and deſerves, the *decent indignation* is to be denominated eccleſiaſtical imperiouſneſs and inſolence.

Leaving, however, ſuch writers, and ſuch writings, to the expoſition of their own illiberality, and to the cenſure, they will be ſure to meet with from the moſt reſpectable and pious diviſion of our Diſſenting Brethren; your Lordſhip, we preſume, will recollect, it is ſomewhere obſerved, by the illuſtrious and immortal *Bacon*, "Nobis res ſalubris videtur, et imprimis utilis, ſi Tractatus inſtituatur ſobrius et diligens, qui de uſu Rationis humanæ in Theologicis præcipiat.

piat. Ejuſmodi tractatum inter deſiderata ponimus; et, *Sophronem*, ſive de legitimo uſu Rationis humanæ in divinis nominamus."

Since nothing ſo complete, as what is here inſinuated, or propoſed, has yet appeared in the republic of letters; your Lordſhip may perhaps, on ſome future occaſion, throw ſuch light on this important ſubject, as may ſerve the great cauſe of revealed Truth—and ſhew, with a more conſummate degree of accuracy than has hitherto been done, the exact line of diſtinction, where *Reaſon* may be ſaid to end, and *Faith* to begin its operations, in divine ſcience. In the mean time, we flat-

ter

ter ourſelves you will condeſcend to take this little Treatiſe into your protection and patronage.

Your Lordſhip is not addreſſed, in theſe lines, with the contemptible voice of adulation—of eccleſiaſtical bigotry—or of ignorant ſuperſtition. We addreſs you, as one of the Fathers of our Church—whoſe *primary* object is, not its emoluments, nor its dignities, nor its political conſequence in the civil conſtitution, but the preſervation of its fundamental truths — the perpetuity of its diſcipline—and the religious character of its members. As ſuch, we venerate your office—we admire your intellectual

intellectual powers—we respect your person—and we pray for the blessing of Heaven upon your indefatigable exertions for its honour and success.

C. D.

D. P. T. H.

W. J. J. C.

E. H. R. E.

THE

NATURE, EXTENT, AND PROVINCE

OF

REASON.

CHAP. I.

Enquiring, whether there be any thing in the nature *and* condition *of man, to* oblige *him to think, that he is not to admit of any doctrines or inſtitutions, as revealed from God, but ſuch, as his own Reaſon can prove to be neceſſary from the nature of things.*

I BEGIN with enquiring, what there is to *oblige* a man to hold this opinion: becauſe, if there be not ſome ſtrong and plain proof ariſing from the *nature* and *condition* of man, to *oblige* him thus to abide by the ſole light of his own Reaſon; it may be ſo far from being a

duty, which he owes to God, that it may be reckoned amongſt his moſt criminal preſumptions. And the pleading for this authority of his own Reaſon, may have the guilt of pleading for his greateſt vanity. And if *ſpiritual pride be the worſt ſort of pride*, a confident reliance upon our own Reaſon, as having a right to determine all matters between God and man, if it ſhould prove to be a *groundleſs pretenſion*, bids fair to be reckoned the higheſt inſtance of the *worſt* kind of the worſt of ſins.

Every other inſtance of vanity, every degree of perſonal pride, and ſelf-eſteem, may be a pardonable weakneſs in compariſon of this. For, how ſmall is that pride, which only makes us prefer our perſonal beauty or merit to that of our fellow-creatures, when compared with

with a ſelf-confiding Reaſon, which is too haughty to adore any thing in the divine counſels, which it cannot fully comprehend; or to ſubmit to any directions from God, but ſuch as its own wiſdom could preſcribe, or approve? Thus much is certain, that there can be no *Medium* in this matter. The claiming this authority to our own Reaſon, muſt either be a very great duty, or amongſt the greateſt of ſins.

If it be a *ſin*, to admit of any *ſecrets* in divine providence—If it be a *crime*, to aſcribe wiſdom and goodneſs to God in things we cannot comprehend—If it be a *baſeneſs* and *meanneſs* of ſpirit, to believe that God can teach us *better*, or *more* than we can teach ourſelves—If it be a *ſhameful apoſtacy* from the dignity of our nature, to be humble in the hands of

of God, to ſubmit to any *myſterious providence* over us, to comply with any other methods of *homage* and *adoration* of him, than ſuch as we could of ourſelves contrive and juſtify, then it is certainly a great duty to aſſert and maintain this authority of our own Reaſon.

On the other hand; If the profoundeſt Humility towards *God*, be the higheſt inſtance of piety—If every thing within us and without us, if every thing we know of God, every thing we know of ourſelves, preach humility to us, as the foundation of every virtue, as the life and ſoul of all holineſs—If *ſin* had its beginning from *pride*, and *hell* be the effect of it; if *devils* are what they are through ſpiritual pride and ſelf-conceit, then, we have great reaſon to believe, that the claiming this authority to our Reaſon,

Reaſon, in oppoſition to the revealed wiſdom of God, is not a frailty of *fleſh* and *blood*, but that ſame ſpiritual pride, which turned *Angels* into *apoſtate* Spirits.

Since therefore this appealing to our own Reaſon, as the abſolutely *perfect meaſure and rule* of all that ought to paſs between God and man, has an *appearance* of a pride of the *worſt* kind, and ſuch as unites us both in temper and conduct with the fallen ſpirits of the kingdom of darkneſs, it highly concerns every pleader on that ſide, to conſider what grounds he proceeds upon; and to aſk himſelf, what there is in the *ſtate* and *condition* of human nature, to oblige him to think that nothing can be *divine*, or *holy*, or *neceſſary*, in religion, but what *human* Reaſon dictates.

I hope the reader will think this a fair

ſtate

ſtate of the caſe, and that all the light we can have in this matter, muſt ariſe from a thorough conſideration of the *ſtate* and *condition* of man in this world. If, without Revelation, he be free from myſteries as a *moral* and *religious* agent, then he has ſome plea from his *ſtate* and *condition* to reject *revealed* myſteries.

But if, in a ſtate of natural religion, and mere morality, he cannot acknowledge a divine providence, or worſhip and adore God without *as much* implicit faith, and humble ſubmiſſion of his Reaſon, as any revealed myſteries require; then, his *ſtate* and *condition* in the world will condemn his refuſal of any revelation ſufficiently atteſted to come from God.

Had mankind continued in a ſtate of *perfect innocence*, without ever failing in

their duty either to God or man, yet even in ſuch a ſtate, they could never have known what God would, or would not reveal to them, but by ſome expreſs revelation from him. And, as God might intend to raiſe them to ſome higher, and unknown ſtate of perfection; ſo he might raiſe them to it by the revelation of ſuch things as their own Reaſon, though innocent and uncorrupt, could not have diſcovered.

But if man, in a ſtate of *innocence*, could have no pretence to ſet himſelf againſt divine Revelation; and make his own Reaſon the *final judge* of what God could, or could not reveal to him; much leſs has he any pretence for ſo doing in his preſent ſtate of *ſin*, *ignorance*, and *miſery*. His *nature* and *condition* are ſo far from furniſhing him with reaſons againſt

againſt Revelation, againſt any *ſupernatural* help from God, that they ſeem to be inconſolable without it; and every circumſtance of his life prepares him to hope for terms of *mercy* and deliverance from his preſent guilt and miſery, not according to *ſchemes* of his *own* contrivance, not from his *own knowledge* of the *nature*, and *reaſon*, and *fitneſs* of things, but from ſome *incomprehenſible depth* of divine Goodneſs.

For, if ſin, and miſery, and ignorance, cannot convince us of our own weakneſs, cannot prepare us to accept of *any methods* of *atoning* for our guilt, but ſuch as our own diſordered Reaſon can ſuggeſt, we are not far from the hardened ſtate of thoſe miſerable ſpirits, that make war againſt God.

For, to inſiſt upon the *prerogative* of our

our own nature, as qualifying us to make our own peace with God, and to reject the *Atonement* which he has provided for us, becauſe we eſteem it more fit and reaſonable, that our *own Repentance* ſhould be ſufficient without it, is the ſame height of *pride* and *impiety*, as to affirm that we have no need of any repentance at all.

For as mankind, if they had continued in a ſtate of *Innocence*, could not have known how their innocence was to be rewarded, or what changes of ſtate God intended them for, but as Revelation had diſcovered theſe things unto them: ſo, after they were *fallen* into a ſtate of guilt and ſin, they could never know what *effects* it was to have upon them; what *miſery* it would expoſe them to; or *when*, or *how*, or *whether* they were ever

ever to be delivered from it, and made as happy as if they had *never* ſinned: theſe are things, that nothing but a Revelation from God could teach them.

So that, for a Sinner to pretend to appoint the *atonement* for his own Sins, or to think himſelf able to tell what it *ought* to be, or what *effect* it muſt have with God, is as fooliſh and vain a preſumption, as if man in *innocence* ſhould have pretended to appoint his own method of being changed into a *Cherub*.

The Writers againſt Revelation, appeal to the *Reaſon* and *Nature* of things, as *infallibly* diſcovering every thing that a Revelation from God can teach us.

If the relations, ſay they, between things, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be not the ſole Rule of God's actions, muſt not God be an arbitrary Being? But if God only commands

commands what the nature of things ſhew to be fit, 'tis ſcarce poſſible that men ſhould miſtake their duty; ſince a Mind that is attentive, can as eaſily diſtinguiſh fit from unfit, as the Eye can beauty from deformity.

It is granted, that there is a fitneſs and unfitneſs of actions founded in the nature of things, and reſulting from the relations that perſons and things bear to one another. It is alſo granted, that the reaſonableneſs of moſt of the duties of children to their parents, of parents to their children, and of men to men, is very apparent, from the relation they bear to one another; and that ſeveral of the duties which we owe to God, plainly appear to us, as ſoon as we acknowledge the relation that is between God and us.

But

But when all this is granted, this *whole argument* proves directly the contrary to that which it is intended to prove.

I readily grant, that the Nature, Reason, and Relations of things and persons, and the fitness of actions resulting from thence, is the *sole Rule* of God's actions. And I appeal to this one common and confessed principle, as a sufficient proof that a man cannot thus abide by the *sole Light* of his own Reason, without contradicting the Nature and Reason of things, and denying this to be the *sole Rule* of God's actions.

For, if the *fitness* of actions be founded in the *nature* of things and persons, and this fitness be the *sole Rule* of God's actions, it is certain that the Rule by which he acts, must in many instances be

be *entirely inconceivable* by us, ſo as not to be known *at all*, and in no inſtances *fully* known, or *perfectly* comprehended.

For, if God be to act according to a *fitneſs founded* in the *nature* of things, and nothing can be fit for him to do, but what has its fitneſs founded in his own *divinely perfect* and *incomprehenſible* nature, muſt he not neceſſarily act by a Rule *above* all human comprehenſion? This argument ſuppoſes that he cannot do what is *fit* for him to do, unleſs what he does has its *fitneſs* founded in his *own nature;* but if he muſt govern his actions by his own nature, he muſt act by a *Rule* that is juſt as *incomprehenſible* to us *as* his own nature.

And we can be no farther *competent Judges* of the *fitneſs* of the conduct of God, than we are competent judges of

the divine nature; and can no more tell what is, or is not *infinitely wise* in God, than we can raise ourselves to a *state* of infinite wisdom.

So that, if the *fitness* of actions be founded in the *particular nature* of things and persons, and the fitness of God's actions must arise from that which is *particular* to his nature, then we have, from this argument, the *utmost certainty* that the *Rule* or *Reasons* of God's actions must in many cases be entirely inconceivable by us, and in no cases perfectly and fully apprehended; and for this very reason, because he is not an *arbitrary Being*, that acts by *mere Will*, but is governed in every thing he does, by the reason and nature of things. For, if he be not arbitrary, but acts according to the nature of things, then he

he muſt act according to his *own nature*. But if his own Nature muſt be the *Reaſon*, *Rule*, and *Meaſure* of his actions; if they be only fit and reaſonable, becauſe they are according to this *Rule and Reaſon*, then it neceſſarily follows, that the fitneſs of many of God's actions muſt be incomprehenſible to us, *merely* for this reaſon, becauſe they have their *proper fitneſs*; ſuch a fitneſs as is founded in *the divine Nature*.

For, ſuppoſing God to be an arbitrary Being, there would then be a bare poſſibility of our comprehending the fitneſs of every thing he required of us. For, as he might act by *mere Will*, ſo he might chuſe to act according to our nature, and ſuitable to our comprehenſions, and not according to his own nature, and infinite perfections.

But,

But, ſuppoſing God not to be an *arbitrary Being*, but to act conſtantly, as the perfections of his own nature make it *fit* and *reaſonable* for him to act, then, there is an utter impoſſibility of our comprehending the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of many of his actions.

For inſtance; look at the *reaſon* of things, and the *fitneſs* of actions, and tell me how they moved God to create mankind in the ſtate and condition they are in. Nothing is more above the Reaſon of men, than to explain the reaſonableneſs and infinite wiſdom of God's Providence in creating man of ſuch a *form* and *condition*, to go through *ſuch* a ſtate of things as human life has ſhewn itſelf to be. ☞ No revealed myſteries can more exceed the Comprehenſion of man, than the ſtate of human life itſelf.

Shew

Shew me according to what *fitneſs*, founded in the *nature* of things, God's infinite wiſdom was determined to form you in ſuch a manner; bring you into ſuch a world; and ſuffer and preſerve *ſuch a ſtate* of things, as human life is; and then, you may have ſome pretence to believe no revealed doctrines, but ſuch as your own Reaſon can deduce from the nature of things, and the fitneſs of actions.

But, whilſt our own *form*, whilſt *Creation* and *Providence* are depths, which you cannot thus look into, it is ſtrangely abſurd to pretend, that God cannot reveal any thing to you as a matter of religion, except your own Reaſon can ſhew its foundation in the nature and reaſon of things.

For

For does not your own *make*, and *conſtitution*, the reaſonableneſs of God's providence, and the *fitneſs* of the State of human life, as much concern you, as any *revealed* doctrines? Is it not as *unfit* for God to create man in ſuch a *ſtate*, ſubject to ſuch a *courſe* of providence, as he cannot *prove* to be founded in the *fitneſs* and *reaſonableneſs* of things; as to reveal to him ſuch truths, or methods of ſalvation, as he cannot by any arguments of his own prove to be neceſſary?

Revelation, you ſay, is on your account, and therefore you ought to ſee the *reaſonableneſs* and *fitneſs* of it.—And do not you alſo ſay, that God has made you for your *own ſake?* ought you not therefore to know the reaſonableneſs and

and fitneſs of God's forming you as you are?—Do not you ſay, that providence is for the *ſake* of Man? is it not therefore fit and reaſonable, in the nature of things, that there ſhould be no *myſteries* or *ſecrets* in providence, but that man ſhould ſo ſee its methods, as to be able to prove all its ſteps to be conſtantly fit and reaſonable?

Do not you ſay, that the *world* is for the *ſake* of man; is it not therefore fit and reaſonable that man ſhould ſee, that the *paſt* and *preſent* ſtate of the world has been ſuch as the reaſon and fitneſs of things required it ſhould be?

Now, if the *imperfect* ſtate of human nature, the *miſeries* and *calamities* of this life, the *diſeaſes* and mortality of human bodies, the *methods* of God's continual providence in governing human affairs, be

be things that as much concern us, and as nearly relate to us, as any methods of revealed religion; and if theſe be things that we cannot examine or explain, according to any *fitneſs* or *unfitneſs* founded in the *nature* of things, but muſt believe a great deal more of the infinite wiſdom of God, than we can ſo explain; have we any reaſon to think, that God cannot, or ought not to raiſe us out of this unhappy ſtate of things, help us to an higher order of life, and exalt us to a nearer enjoyment of himſelf, by any means, but ſuch as our own poor Reaſon can grope out of the nature and fitneſs of things?

Now *why is it*, that all is thus myſterious and unmeaſurable by human Reaſon, in theſe matters ſo nearly concerning human nature? It is becauſe

becauſe God is not an *arbitrary Being*, but does that, which the *incomprehenſible Perfections* of his own nature, make it *fit* and *reaſonable* for him to do. Do but grant, that nothing can be *fit* for God to do, but what is *according* to his own *infinite perfections*; let but this be the *Rule* of his actions, and then you have the *fulleſt* proof, that the fitneſs of his actions muſt be *above* our comprehenſion, who can only judge of a *fitneſs* according to our *own perfections*; and then we muſt be ſurrounded with myſtery, for this very reaſon, becauſe God acts according to a *certain Rule, his own Nature.*

Again: What is the *Nature* of a human Soul; upon what *terms*, and in what manner it is *united* to the body; how far it is *different* from it; how far it is *ſubject* to it; what powers and faculties

culties it *derives* from it, are things, wherein the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of God, and the *Happineſs* of man are deeply concerned. Is it not neceſſary that theſe things ſhould have their foundation in the *reaſon* and *fitneſs* of things? and yet, who can ſhew that this *ſtate* of ſoul and body *is* founded in the reaſon and fitneſs of things?

Again: The *Origin* of the ſoul, at what time it enters into the body, whether it be *immediately* created at its entrance into the body, or comes out of a *pre-exiſtent ſtate*, are things that cannot be known from any fitneſs or reaſonableneſs, founded in the nature of things; and yet it is as neceſſary to believe this is done according to *certain reaſons* of wiſdom and goodneſs, as to believe there is a God.

Now,

Now, who can ſay that it is the ſame thing, whether human ſouls are created *immediately* for human bodies, or whether they come into them out of ſome *pre-exiſtent ſtate?* For aught we know, one of theſe ways may be exceeding *fit* and *wiſe*, and the other as entirely *unjuſt* and *unreaſonable*; and yet, when Reaſon examines either of theſe ways, it finds itſelf *equally perplexed* with difficulties, and knows not which to chuſe: but if ſouls be immaterial [as all philoſophy now proves] it muſt be one of them.

And perhaps, the reaſon why God has revealed ſo little of theſe matters in holy Scripture itſelf, is, becauſe any more particular revelation of them, would but have perplexed us with greater difficulties, as not having capacities or

ideas to *comprehend* ſuch things. For, as all our natural knowledge is confined to ideas borrowed from *experience*, and the uſe of our *ſenſes* about *human things*; as Revelation can only teach us things that have ſome likeneſs to what we already know; as our notions of equity and juſtice are very limited, and confined to certain actions between man and man; ſo, if God had revealed to us more particularly, the *origin* of our ſouls, and the *reaſon* of their ſtate in human bodies, we might perhaps have been expoſed to greater difficulties by ſuch knowledge, and been leſs able to vindicate the juſtice and goodneſs of God, than we are by our preſent ignorance.

Again; the origin of *Sin* and *Evil*, or how it entered into the world conſiſtently

ſiſtently with the infinite wiſdom of God, is a myſtery of *natural religion*, which Reaſon cannot unfold. For, who can ſhew from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things, that it was *fit* and *reaſonable*, for the Providence of God to ſuffer ſin and evil to enter, and continue in the world as they have? Here therefore, the Man of natural religion muſt drop his method of reaſoning from the nature and fitneſs of things; and that, in an article of the higheſt concern to the moral world; and be as mere a believer, as he that believes the moſt incomprehenſible myſtery of revealed religion.

Now, as there have been in the ſeveral ages of the world, ſome *impatient*, *reſtleſs*, and *preſuming* ſpirits, who, becauſe they could not, in theſe points, explain the juſtice of God's providence,

have taken refuge in horrid *Atheiſm*; ſo, they made juſt the ſame *ſober uſe* of their Reaſon, as our *modern unbelievers*, who, becauſe they cannot comprehend as they would, the *fitneſs* and *neceſſity* of certain chriſtian doctrines, reſign themſelves up to a hardened *Infidelity*. For, ☞ It is juſt as wiſe and reaſonable to allow of no myſteries in *Revelation*, as to allow of no myſteries or ſecrets in *Creation* and *Providence*.

To proceed: If the *fitneſs of actions be founded in the nature and relations of Beings*, then nothing can be fit for God to do, but ſo far as it is fit for the *Governor of all created beings*, whether on earth, or in any other part of the univerſe; and he cannot act fitly towards mankind, but by acting as is fit for the Governor of all beings.

Now,

Now, what is fit for the *Governor* of *all created nature* to do, in this or that particular part of his creation, is as much above our Reaſon to *tell*, as it is above our power to *govern* all beings. And how *Mankind* ought to be governed, with relation to the whole creation, of which they are ſo ſmall a part, is a matter equally above our knowledge; becauſe we know not how they are a part of the whole, or what relation they bear to any other part, or how their ſtate affects the whole, or any other part, any more than we know what Beings the whole conſiſts of.

Now, there is nothing that we know with more certainty, than that God is Governor of the whole, and that Mankind are a part of the whole; and that the uniformity and harmony of divine Providence,

Providence, muſt ariſe from his infinitely wiſe government of the whole; and therefore we have the utmoſt certainty, that we are *vaſtly incompetent* judges of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any methods, which God uſes in the government of ſo ſmall a part of the univerſe as mankind are.

For, if the actions of God cannot have their *proper fitneſs*, unleſs they are according to the *incomprehenſible greatneſs* of his *own Nature*, and according to his incomprehenſible greatneſs, as *Lord* and *Governor* of all created nature; have we not the moſt undeniable certainty, that the fitneſs of the divine Providence over mankind, muſt be a ſecret only to be adored, but never comprehended, in this life?—

Again, if the *fitneſs of actions be founded in the Relations of beings to one another*, then

then the fitneſs of the actions of God's providence over mankind, muſt be in many inſtances *altogether myſterious and incomprehenſible to us.*

For the *relation* which God bears to mankind, as their *all-perfect Creator* and continual *Preſerver*, is a relation that we conceive as imperfectly, and know as little of, as we do of any of the divine attributes. When we compare it to that of a *Father* and his children, a *Prince* and his ſubjects, a *Proprietor* and his property, we have explained it in the beſt manner we can; but ſtill have left it as much a *ſecret*, as we do the divine nature, when we ſay it is *infinitely* ſuperior to every thing that is *finite*.

We know with certainty, ſeveral *effects* of this relation; as, that it puts us under the care and protection of a wiſe, and juſt,

juſt, and merciful Providence, and demands from us the higheſt inſtances of humility, duty, adoration and thankſgiving. But, what it is in its own nature, what kind of *ſtate*, or degree of *dependency* it ſignifies; what it is, to exiſt in and by God; what it is, to ſee by a *light* that is his, to act by a *power* from him, to live by a *life* in him; is, what we conceive as *imperfectly*, as what it is to be in the *third heavens*, or to hear words that cannot be uttered.

But, if this relation conſiſt in theſe *inconceivable* things, in a communication of *life*, *light*, and *power*; if theſe be enjoyed in God, and in ourſelves; our own, and yet his, in a manner not to be explained by any thing that we ever heard, or ſaw; then, we muſt neceſſarily be poor judges of what is fit for

for God to require of us, becauſe of this *relation*. It teaches us nothing, but the ſuperficialneſs of our own knowledge, and the unfathomable depths of the divine perfections.

It is becauſe of this incomprehenſible Relation between God and his creatures, that we are unavoidably ignorant of what God may juſtly require of us, either in a ſtate of *Innocence* or *Sin*. For, as the fitneſs of actions between Beings *related*, muſt reſult from their reſpective Natures, ſo the incomprehenſibility of the Divine Nature, on which the Relation between God and man is founded, makes it utterly impoſſible for us to ſay, what *kind* of *homage*, or *worſhip*, he may *fitly* require of man in a ſtate of *innocence*; or what *different* worſhip and homage

mage he may, or muſt require of men as *ſinners*.

As to the obligations of moral or ſocial duties, which have their foundation in the conveniences of this life, and the ſeveral relations we bear to one another, theſe are the ſame in the ſtate of *Innocence* or *Sin*; and we know, that we truly act according to the Divine Will, when we act according to what theſe relations require of us.

But the queſtion is, What diſtinct kind of *Homage*, or *Service*, or *Worſhip*, God may require us to render to Him, either in a ſtate of *Innocence* or *Sin*, on account of that Relation he bears to us as an all-perfect Creator and Governor?

But this is a queſtion, that God alone can reſolve.

Human

Human Reaſon cannot enter into it; it has no principle to proceed upon in it. For as the *neceſſity* of Divine Worſhip and Homage, ſo the *particular matter* and *manner* of it, muſt have its reaſon in the Divine Nature.

Sacrifice, if conſidered only as an *human Invention*, could not be proved to be a reaſonable ſervice. Yet, conſidered as a *Divine Inſtitution*, it would be the greateſt folly not to receive it as a reaſonable ſervice. For, as we could ſee no reaſon for it, if it were of human invention, ſo we ſhould have the greateſt reaſon to comply with it, becauſe it was of Divine Appointment. Not as if the Divine Appointment altered the *nature* and *fitneſs* of things; but, becauſe nothing has the *nature* and *fitneſs* of Divine Worſhip, but *becauſe* it is of Divine Appointment.

Man

Man, therefore, had he continued in a ſtate of Innocence, and without Revelation, might have lived in an awful fear, and pious regard of God, and obſerved every duty both of moral and civil life, as an act of obedience to him. But he could have no foundation either to invent any particular *matter* or *manner* of Divine Worſhip himſelf, or to reject any that was appointed by God as *unneceſſary*. It would have been ridiculous to have pleaded his innocence, as having no need of a Divine Worſhip. For who can have greater reaſon, or be fitter to worſhip God, than innocent Beings? It would have been more abſurd to have objected the ſufficiency and perfection of their Reaſon; for why ſhould men reject a *revealed method and manner* of Divine Worſhip and Service, becauſe God had

had given them Senſe and Reaſon of their own ſufficient for the duties of ſocial and civil life?

And as Reaſon, in a ſtate of ſuch innocence and perfection, could not have any pretence to ſtate, or appoint, the matter or manner of Divine Worſhip, ſo when the ſtate of innocence was changed for that of ſin, it then became more difficult for bare Reaſon to know what kind of homage, or worſhip, could be acceptable to God from Sinners.

For, what the *Relation* betwixt God and Sinners makes it fit and reaſonable for God to require or accept of them, cannot be determined by human Reaſon.

This is a *new State*, and the foundation of a *new Relation*; and nothing can be fit *for God to do in it, but what has its*

fitneſs reſulting from it. We have nothing to help our conceptions of the forementioned *relative characters* of God, as our *Governor* and *Preſerver*, but what we derive from our idea of human *Fathers* and *Governors*. Which idea only helps us to comprehend theſe *relations*, juſt as our idea of human power helps us to comprehend the *Omnipotence* of God. For a father, or governor, no more repreſents the *true ſtate* of God as our *Governor* and *Preſerver*, than our living in our Father's *family*, repreſents the *true manner* of our living in God.

Theſe Relations are both very plain, and very myſterious; they are very plain and certain, as to the *reality* of their exiſtence; and highly myſterious and inconceivable, as to the *manner* of their exiſtence.

That

That which is *plain* and *certain*, in theſe relative characters of God, clearly ſhews our obligations to every inſtance of *duty*, *homage*, *adoration*, *love* and *gratitude*.

And that, which is *myſterious* and *inconceivable* in them, is a juſt and ſolid foundation of that *profound humility*, *awful reverence*, *internal piety*, and *tremendous ſenſe* of the divine Majeſty, with which devout and pious perſons think of God, and aſſiſt at the *offices* and *inſtitutions* of Religion. Which excites in them a higher zeal for doctrines and inſtitutions of divine Revelation, than for all things human; which fills them with regard and reverence for all *things*, *places*, and *offices*, that are either by divine or human authority appointed, to aſſiſt

and help their desired intercourse with God.

And, if some people, by a *long* and *strict* attention to *Reason*, *clear ideas*, the *fitness* and *unfitness* of things, have at last arrived at a demonstrative certainty, that all these sentiments of piety and devotion are mere *bigotry*, *superstition*, and *enthusiasm*; I shall only now observe, that *youthful extravagance*, *passion*, and *debauchery*, by their own *natural tendency*, without the assistance of any other guide, seldom fail of making the same discovery. And, though it is not reckoned any reflection upon *great Wits*, when they hit upon the same thought, yet it may seem some disparagement of that *Reason* and *Philosophy*, which teaches *old men* to think and judge the same of Religion,

gion, as *paſſion* and *extravagance* teach the young.—

To return: As there is no ſtate in human life, that can give us a true idea of any of the forementioned relative characters of God, ſo this relative ſtate of God towards ſinners is ſtill more remote, and leſs capable of being truly comprehended by any thing obſervable in the relations betwixt a *judge* and criminals, *a creditor* and his debtors, a *phyſician* and his patients, a *father* or *prince*, and their diſobedient children and ſubjects.

For none of theſe ſtates ſeparately, nor all of them jointly conſidered, give us any juſt idea, either of the *nature* and *guilt* of ſin, or how God is to deal with ſinners, on the account of the relation he bears to them.

And

And to aſk, whether God, in puniſhing ſinners, acts as a *phyſician* towards patients, or as a *creditor* towards debtors, or as a *prince* towards rebels, or a *judge* over criminals, is the ſame weakneſs, as to aſk, whether God, as our *continual preſerver*, acts as our parents, from whom we have our *maintenance*, or as a prince, who only *protects* us. For, as the *maintenance* and *protection*, that we receive from our parents and prince, are not proper and true repreſentations of the *nature* and *manner* of our *preſervation* in God, but only the propereſt words that human language affords us, to ſpeak of things not human, but divine and inconceivable in their own proper natures: ſo a *phyſician* and his patients, a *creditor* and his debtors, a *prince* and his rebels, or a *judge* over criminals, neither ſeparately

nor

nor jointly conſidered, are proper and ſtrict repreſentations of the *reaſons* and *manner* of God's proceedings with ſinners, but only help us to a more proper language to ſpeak about them, than any other ſtates of human life.

To aſk, whether *Sin* hath ſolely the *nature* of an *offence*, againſt a prince or a father, and ſo is pardonable by mere goodneſs; whether it be like an *error* in a *road* or *path*, and ſo is entirely at an end, when the right path is taken; whether its guilt hath the nature of a debt, and ſo is capable of being diſcharged, juſt as a debt is; whether it affects the ſoul, as a *wound* or *diſeaſe* affects the body, and ſo ought only to move God to act as a good phyſician? all theſe queſtions are as vain

as

as to aſk, Whether knowledge in God be really *thinking*, or his nature a real *ſubſtance*. For as his knowledge and nature cannot be *ſtrictly* defined, but are capable of being ſignified by the terms, *thinking* and *ſubſtance*, ſo the nature of ſin is not *ſtrictly repreſented* under any of theſe characters, but is capable of receiving *ſome repreſentation* from every one of them.

When Sin is ſaid to be an *offence* againſt God, it is to teach us, that we have infinitely more reaſon to dread it on *God's account*, than to dread any offence againſt our parents, or governors.

When it is compared to a *debt*, it is to ſignify, that our ſins make us accountable to God, not in the *ſame manner*, but with the ſame certainty, as a debtor is anſwer-

anſwerable to his creditor; and becauſe it has ſome likeneſs to a debt, which of ourſelves we are not able to pay.

When it is compared to a *wound*, or diſeaſe in the body, it is not to teach us, that it may as eaſily be healed as bodily wounds, but, to help us to conceive the greatneſs of its evil; that, as diſeaſes bring death to the body, ſo ſin brings a worſe kind of death upon the ſoul.

Since therefore, the *nature* and *guilt* of ſin can only ſo far be known, as to make it highly to be *dreaded*, but not ſo known as to be *fully* underſtood, by any thing we can compare it to—

Since the *relation* which God bears to *ſinners*, can only be ſo known, as to make it highly reaſonable to proſtrate ourſelves before him, in every inſtance of humility

humility and penitence; but not ſo fully known, as to teach us how, or in what manner, God muſt deal with us; it plainly follows, that, if God be not an *arbitrary* Being, but acts according to a *fitneſs*, *reſulting* from this relation, then he muſt, in this reſpect, act by a *Rule* or *Reaſon* known only to himſelf, and ſuch as we cannot *poſſibly* ſtate from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things.

This account is ſufficient to ſhew us, with how little reaſon and regard to the nature of things, *unbelievers* object againſt the *Atonement* for ſins by Jeſus Chriſt.

Their firſt objection is, that *Repentance alone* is a *ſufficient atonement* for ſin. Were they to affirm, that *ſinning Angels* might ſufficiently regain their former perfection by a *bare wiſh*, they would proceed

proceed as much according to their knowledge of the nature of things, as in affirming, that *ſinful man* can *merit* the pardon of his ſins by his *own repentance.* I ſay, *merit*, becauſe they, who hold repentance to be a *ſufficient title* to pardon, can be no farther certain of it, than ſo far as they are *certain*, that it *merits* it. And, according to this *ſcheme*, the *penitent*, who thinks he has repented, need not *beg* of God to have compaſſion upon him, but *demands* a due, which the *nature of things* gives him a right to claim.

But if the nature of things, and the fitneſs of actions reſulting from their relations, is to be the rule of our Reaſon, then *Reaſon* muſt be here at a full ſtop, and can have no more light or knowledge to proceed upon, in ſtating the *nature*,

ture, the *guilt*, or proper *atonement* of ſin in men, than of ſin in *Angels*.

For *Reaſon*, by conſulting the *nature* and *fitneſs* of things, can no more tell us, what the *guilt* of ſin is; what *hurt* it does us; how far it *enters* into, and *alters* our very nature; what *contrariety to*, and *ſeparation* from God, it neceſſarily brings upon us; or what *ſupernatural* means are, or are not, neceſſary to aboliſh it; our *Reaſon* can no more tell this, than our *ſenſes* can tell us, what is the *inward*, and what is the *outward* light of Angels.

Aſk Reaſon, what *effect* ſin has upon the ſoul? and it can tell you no more, than if you had aſked, what effect the *omnipreſence* of God has upon the ſoul?

Aſk

Aſk Reaſon, and the nature of things, what is, or ought to be, the *true nature* of an atonement for ſin; how far it is like *paying* a *debt*, *reconciling* a *difference*, or *healing* a *wound*, or how far it is different from them? and it can tell you no more, than if you had aſked, what is the *true degree* of power that *preſerves* us in exiſtence; how far it is *like* that which at firſt created us, and how far it is *different* from it?

All theſe enquiries are, by the nature of things, made impoſſible to us; and we can only become *knowing* and *philoſophers*, in theſe matters, by deſerting our Reaſon, and giving ourſelves up to *viſion* and *imagination*.

And we have as much authority from the reaſon and nature of things, to appeal to *hunger* and *thirſt*, and *ſenſual plea-*

ſure, to tell us *how* our ſouls ſhall live in the beatifick preſence of God, as to appeal to our *Reaſon* and *Logick*, to demonſtrate how ſin is to be *atoned*, or the ſoul *altered, prepared*, and *purified*, for future happineſs.

For God has no more given us our Reaſon, to *ſettle* the nature of an atonement for ſin; or to find out what can, or cannot, take away its guilt, than he has given us *ſenſes* and *appetites* to ſtate the nature, or diſcover the ingredients, of future happineſs.

And he, who rejects the *atonement* for ſins made by the Son of God, as *needleſs*, becauſe he cannot prove it to be *neceſſary*, is as extravagant, as he that ſhould deny that God created him by his *only Son*, becauſe he did not *remember* it. For our Memory is as proper a faculty

culty to tell us, whether God at firſt created us, and all things, by his only Son, as our *Reaſon* is to tell us, whether we ought to be reſtored to God, with, or without the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt.

This objection, therefore, againſt any *ſupernatural* means of atoning for ſin, taken from the *ſufficiency* of our own Repentance, is as *clear* and *philoſophical*, as that *knowledge* which is without *any ideas*; and as juſtly to be relied upon, as that *concluſion* which has no *premiſes*.—

But, there are two more objections urged againſt the atonement for ſin, made by Jeſus Chriſt. *Firſt*, as it is an *human ſacrifice, which nature itſelf abhors*; and which was looked upon as the great abomination of idolatrous *pagan* worſhip.

The *cruelty*, *injuſtice*, and *impiety*, of ſhedding *human* blood in the ſacrifices of the *pagan* religion, is fully granted: but *Reaſon* cannot thence bring the ſmalleſt objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it was *human*.

For how can Reaſon be more diſregarded, than in ſuch an argument as this? The *Pagans* were unjuſt, cruel, and impious, in offering human blood to their falſe gods, therefore the true God cannot receive any *human* ſacrifice for ſin, or allow any perſons to die, as a puniſhment for ſin.

For, if no human ſacrifice can be fit for God to receive, becauſe human ſacrifices, as parts of *pagan* worſhip, were unjuſt and impious; then it would follow, that the *mortality*, to which all mankind are appointed by God, muſt have

have the *ſame cruelty* and *injuſtice* in it. Now, that *death* is a puniſhment for ſin, and that all mankind are by death offered as a *ſacrifice* for ſin, is not only a doctrine of revealed Religion, but the plain dictate of Reaſon. For, though it is Revelation alone that can teach us, how God threatened death as the puniſhment of a particular ſin, yet Reaſon muſt be obliged to acknowledge, that men die, becauſe they are ſinners. But if men die, becauſe they are ſinners, and Reaſon itſelf muſt receive this, as the moſt juſtifiable cauſe of Death; then Reaſon muſt allow, that the death of all mankind is appointed by the true God, as a *ſacrifice* for ſin. But, if Reaſon muſt acknowledge the death of all mankind as a ſacrifice for ſin, then it can have no

juſt

juſt objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, *becauſe* it was *human.*

Revelation, therefore, teaches nothing more hard to be believed on this point, than Reaſon teaches. For, if it be juſt and fit in God, to *appoint* and *devote* all men to death, as the proper *puniſhment* of their ſins; how can it be proved to be unjuſt and unfit in God, to receive the death of Jeſus Chriſt, for the ſame ends?

I do not pretend to prove the *fitneſs* and *reaſonableneſs* of God's procedure in the *mortality* of mankind; Revelation is not under any neceſſity of proving this; becauſe it is no difficulty that ariſes from Revelation, but equally belongs to natural religion; and both of them muſt acknowledge it to be fit and reaſonable; not

not becauſe it can be proved to be ſo from the nature of things, but is to be believed to be ſo, by faith and piety.

But, if the neceſſary faith and piety of natural religion, will not ſuffer us to think it *inconſiſtent* with the juſtice and goodneſs of God, to appoint all mankind victims to death on the account of ſin, then *Reaſon*, or *natural Religion*, can have no objection againſt the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it is an *human ſacrifice*.

And all that *Revelation* adds to *natural religion*, on the point of *human* ſacrifices, is only this; the knowledge of *one*, that gives *merit*, *effect*, and *ſanctification*, to all the reſt.

Secondly, It is objected, that the Atonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, repreſents God as puniſhing the *innocent*, and acquitting

quitting the *guilty;* or, as puniſhing the innocent *inſtead* of the guilty.

But this proceeds all upon miſtake: for the atonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, though it procures pardon for the guilty, yet it does not acquit them, or excuſe them from any puniſhment, or ſuffering for ſin, which *Reaſon* could impoſe upon them. Natural religion calls men to repentance for their ſins: the atonement made by Jeſus Chriſt, does not acquit them from it, or pardon them without it; but calls them to a *ſeverer* repentance, a *higher* ſelf-puniſhment and penance, than natural religion, alone, preſcribes. So that *Reaſon* cannot accuſe this atonement, of *acquitting* the guilty; ſince it brings them under a neceſſity of doing *more*, and performing a

ſeverer repentance than Reaſon, alone, can impoſe upon them.

God therefore does not, by this proceeding, as is unreaſonably ſaid, ſhew his *diſlike* of the *innocent*, and his *approbation* of the *wicked*.

For how can God be thought to puniſh our bleſſed Saviour out of *diſlike*, if his ſufferings be repreſented of ſuch infinite merit with him? Or, how can he ſhew thereby his *approbation* of the guilty, whoſe repentance is not *acceptable* to him, till recommended by the infinite merits of Jeſus Chriſt?

Reaſon therefore has nothing that it can juſtly object againſt the atonement made by our bleſſed Lord, either as it was an *human ſacrifice*, or as *freeing* the *guilty*, and puniſhing the innocent in their ſtead; becauſe this very Sacrifice calls

calls people to a *higher ſtate* of ſuffering and puniſhment for ſin, than *Reaſon*, alone, could oblige them to undergo.

As to the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of our bleſſed Lord's ſufferings, as he was God and man; and the *nature* and *degree* of their worth; Reaſon can no more enter into this matter, or *diſprove* any thing about it, than it can enter into the ſtate of the whole creation, and ſhew, how it could, or could not, be in the whole, better than it is.

For you may as well aſk any of your *ſenſes*, as aſk your *Reaſon* this principal queſtion, *Whether any ſupernatural mean be neceſſary for the atonement of the ſins of mankind?* Or, ſuppoſing it neceſſary, whether the *mediation*, *death*, and *inter-*

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ceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, as God and man, be that true ſupernatural mean?

For, as the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any *ſupernatural* means, for the atonement of ſin, muſt reſult from the *incomprehenſible relation* God bears to ſinners; as it muſt have ſuch *neceſſity*, *worth*, and *dignity*, as this relation *requires*, and becauſe it requires it; it neceſſarily follows, that, if God act according to *this relation*, the *fitneſs* of his actions cannot be according to *our comprehenſion*.—

Again: Suppoſing ſome *ſupernatural means* to be neceſſary, for deſtroying the guilt and power of ſin; or that the *mediation*, *ſufferings*, and *interceſſion*, of the Son of God incarnate, be the true ſupernatural means, it neceſſarily follows, that a Revelation of ſuch, or any other *ſupernatural* means, cannot poſſibly

ſibly be made obvious to our Reaſon and Senſes, as the things of human life, or the tranſactions amongſt men are; but can only be ſo revealed, as to become juſt occaſions of our *faith*, *humility*, *adoration*, and *pious reſignation*, to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs.

For, to ſay that ſuch a thing is *ſupernatural*, is only ſaying, that it is ſomething, which, by the *neceſſary ſtate* of our own nature, we are as incapable of knowing, as we are incapable of ſeeing *ſpirits*.

If therefore ſupernatural and divine things be ever revealed to us, their *nature* cannot poſſibly be revealed to us; that is, they cannot be revealed to us, as they are in their *own nature:* for if they could, ſuch things would not be

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ſupernatural, but ſuch as were ſuited to our capacities.

If an *Angel* could appear to us, as it is in its own nature, then we ſhould be *naturally* capable of ſeeing angels; but, becauſe our nature is not *capable* of ſuch a ſight, and angels are, as to us, *ſupernatural* objects; therefore, when *angels* appear to men, they muſt appear in ſome *human*, or *corporeal* form, that their appearance may be ſuited to our capacities.

It is juſt thus, when any *ſupernatural* or *divine* matter is revealed by God: it can no more poſſibly be revealed to us, as it is in its *own nature*, than an *Angel* can appear to us, or make itſelf viſible by us, as it is in its own nature; but ſuch ſupernatural matter can only be revealed to us, by being repreſented to

us

us by ſomething that we already *naturally* know.

Thus, Revelation teaches us this *ſupernatural* matter; that Jeſus Chriſt is making *perpetual interceſſion for us in heaven.* For Chriſt's *real ſtate*, or *manner* of exiſtence with God in heaven, in regard to his Church, cannot, as it is in its *own nature*, be deſcribed to us; it is in this reſpect *ineffable*, and *incomprehenſible.* And therefore, this high and inconceivable manner of Chriſt's exiſtence with God in heaven, in regard to his church, is revealed to us under an idea, which gives us the trueſt repreſentation of it, that we are capable of; *viz.* the idea of a *perpetual interceſſion* for his church.

But, if any one ſhould thence infer, that the Son of God muſt therefore either

either be always upon his knees in acts of *mental* or *vocal* prayer, or *proſtrate* in ſome humble form of a ſupplicant, he would make a very weak inference.

Becauſe this revealed idea of Chriſt, as a perpetual Interceſſor in heaven, is only a comparative repreſentation of ſomething, that cannot be *directly* and *plainly* known, as it is in its own nature; and only teaches us, how to believe ſomething, though imperfectly, yet *truly* and *uſefully* of an *incomprehenſible* matter.

Juſt as our own ideas of *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* do not teach us what the divine wiſdom and goodneſs are in their *own natures*; but only help us to believe ſomething *truly* and *uſefully* of thoſe perfecti-

ons of God, which are in themſelves inconceivable by us.

But then, there is no inferring any thing from theſe ideas, by which divine and ſupernatural things are repreſented to us, only the *truth* and *certainty* of that *likeneſs* under which they are repreſented.

Thus, from our own idea of goodneſs in ourſelves, we can infer nothing concerning goodneſs, as it is a perfection inherent in God, but only this, that there certainly is in God ſome *inconceivable*, *infinite* perfection, *truly anſwerable* to that which we call goodneſs in ourſeves, though as *infinitely* different from it, as *Omnipotence* is infinitely different from all that we *naturally* know of *power*.

But

But then, we can proceed no farther than to the *truth* and *certainty* of this *likeneſs*; we cannot by any farther conſiderations of the *nature* and *manner* of goodneſs, as it is in ourſelves, infer any thing farther, as to the *nature* and *manner* of the *divine goodneſs*. This is as impoſſible, as to ſtate the real nature and manner of *Omnipotence*, by conſidering the *particulars* of *human power*.

In like manner, our revealed idea of Jeſus Chriſt as an *Interceſſor* for us in heaven, gives us the utmoſt certainty that he is in heaven for our benefit, in a manner *truly* and *fully* anſwerable to that of a *powerful Interceſſor*. But if, from conſidering our own ideas of *human Interceſſors*, we ſhould thence pretend to infer the *real ſupernatural* manner of Chriſt's exiſtence in heaven, we ſhould

fall

fall into the ſame abſurdity, as if we undertook to repreſent the *true* nature of *Omnipotence*, by conſidering what we knew of the *nature* and *manner* of human power.

Again: When it is revealed to us, that the bleſſed Jeſus is the one *Mediator* between God and man; that, he is the *Atonement*, the *Propitiation*, and *Satisfaction* for our ſins: theſe expreſſions only teach us *as much* about ſo great a myſtery, as *human* language can repreſent. But, they do not teach us the *real* or *perfect* nature of Chriſt's *ſtate* between God and ſinners. For that, being a *divine* and *ſupernatural* matter, cannot be revealed to us as it is in its *own Nature*, any more than the *eſſence* of God can be made *viſible* to our eyes.

But

But theſe expreſſions teach us thus much with certainty, that there is in the *ſtate* of Chriſt between God and ſinners, ſomething infinitely and inconceivably beneficial to us; and *truly anſwerable* to all that we mean by *mediation*, *atonement*, *propitiation*, and *ſatisfaction*.

And though the *real*, *internal manner*, of this mediation and atonement, as it is in its *own nature*, is *incomprehenſible* by us, yet this does not leſſen our knowledge of the *truth* and *certainty* of it; any more than the *incomprehenſibility* of the divine nature leſſens our *certainty* of its real exiſtence.

And as our idea of God, though conſiſting of incomprehenſible perfections, helps us to a real and certain knowledge of the divine nature; and, though all myſterious, is yet the ſolid foundation

of

of all piety; ſo our idea of Jeſus Chriſt, as our *mediator* and *atonement*, though it be incomprehenſible in itſelf, as to its real nature, yet helps us to a *certain* and *real* knowledge of Chriſt, as our *mediator* and *atonement*; and, though full of myſtery, is yet full of motives to the higheſt degrees of piety, devotion, love, and gratitude unto God.

All objections therefore, raiſed from difficulties about the nature of *atonements*, *propitiations*, and *ſatisfactions*, as theſe words are uſed to ſignify in human life, and common language, are vain, and entirely groundleſs.

For all theſe objections proceed upon this ſuppoſition, that *atonement*, or *ſatisfaction*, when attributed to Jeſus Chriſt, ſignify neither *more* nor *leſs*, than when they are uſed as terms in *human laws*, or in

in *civil* life.—Take away this ſuppoſition, and all objections are entirely removed with it.

Thus, it is thought an unanſwerable difficulty in the preſent caſe, How *ſins freely pardoned, could want any expiation?* Or how, after a full *equivalent paid, and adequate ſatisfaction given, all could be mercy and pure forgiveneſs?*

And yet all this difficulty is founded upon this abſurd ſuppoſition, that atonement and ſatisfaction, when attributed to Jeſus Chriſt, ſignify neither more nor leſs, than atonements and ſatisfactions, when ſpoken of in human laws, and human life.

Which is full as abſurd, as to ſuppoſe, that *power* and *life*, when attributed to God, ſignify neither more nor leſs, than when they are ſpoken of men: for there

is

is no reaſon why we ſhould think there is any thing myſterious and incomprehenſible in *power* and *life*, when attributed to God; but what is the ſame reaſon for our thinking, that *atonement* and *ſatisfaction*, when aſcribed to the Son of God, muſt be myſterious and incomprehenſible.

To return: I have granted this great principle, *That the relations of things and perſons, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, are the ſole Rule of God's actions:* and I have granted it upon this ſuppoſition, that it muſt thence follow, that God muſt act according to his *own Nature;* and therefore nothing could be fit for God to do, or worthy of him, but what had the reaſon of its fitneſs in his own nature: and if ſo, then the *Rule* of his actions could not fall within *our Com-*

prehenſion. And conſequently, *Reaſon alone*, could not be a *competent judge* of God's proceedings; or ſay, what God might, or might not, require of us.

But though I have thus far, and for this reaſon, granted the *Nature* and *Relations* of things and beings, to be *the Rule* of God's actions, becauſe that plainly ſuppoſes, that therefore his *own Nature* muſt be the rule of his actions; yet ſince our modern oppoſers of revealed doctrines of religion, hold it in another ſenſe, and mean by it, I know not what *eternal*, *immutable* reaſons and relations of things, *independent* of any Being, and which are a *common rule and law of God and man*, I entirely declare againſt this, as an erroneous and groundleſs opinion.

Thus,

Thus, when an objector ſays, *If the relations between things, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be not the ſole rule of God's actions, muſt he not be an arbitrary being?* as he here means ſome *eternal, immutable relations, independent* of God; ſo, to ſuppoſe, that God cannot be a *wiſe* and *good* being, unleſs ſuch eternal, independent relations, be the *ſole rule* of his actions, is as erroneous, as to affirm, that God cannot be *omniſcient*, unleſs *mathematical demonſtrations* be his *ſole manner* of knowing all things. And it is juſt as reaſonable to fix God's knowledge *ſolely* in mathematical demonſtrations, that we may thence be aſſured of his *infallible knowledge*, as to make I know not what independent relations of things, the *ſole rule* of his actions, that we may thence

thence be aſſured, he is not an *arbitrary*, but a wiſe and good Being.

And we have as ſtrong reaſons to believe God to be, in the higheſt degree, *wiſe* and *good*, without knowing on *what* his wiſdom and goodneſs are founded; as we have to believe him to be *omniſcient*, and *eternal*, without knowing on *what* his *omniſcience* is founded; or to *what* his *eternity* is owing. And we have the ſame reaſon to hold it a vain and fruitleſs enquiry, to aſk, what *obliges* God to be *Wiſe* and *Good*, as to aſk what obliges him to be *Omniſcient*, or *Eternal*.

And, as it would be abſurd to aſcribe the *Exiſtence* of God to *any Cauſe*, or found it upon any *independent Relations* of things, ſo it is the ſame abſurdity, to aſcribe the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs

neſs of God to *any cauſe*, or found them upon any independent relations of things.

Nor do we any more *loſe* the notion, or *leſſen* the certainty of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, becauſe we cannot ſay on *what* they are founded, or to *what* they are to be aſcribed, than we *loſe* the notion of God, or render his exiſtence *uncertain*, becauſe it cannot be founded on any thing, or aſcribed to any cauſe.

And as, in our account of the exiſtence of things, we are obliged to have recourſe to a Being, whoſe exiſtence muſt not be aſcribed to *any Cauſe*, becauſe every thing cannot have a cauſe, no more than every thing can be created; ſo, in our account of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, there is the ſame neceſſity of having recourſe to an infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that never *began* to be, and

that

that is as different as to its *reaſon* and *manner* of exiſtence, from all other wiſdom and goodneſs, which have a beginning, as the *exiſtence* of God is *different* from the exiſtence of the creatures.

But, if it be neceſſary to hold, that there is an infinite wiſdom and goodneſs that *never began* to be, then it is as neceſſary to affirm, that ſuch wiſdom and goodneſs can no more be *founded* upon the *relations* of things, than the *unbeginning exiſtence* of God can be *founded* upon the exiſtence of things. And to ſeek for any *reaſons* of a wiſdom and goodneſs, that could not begin to be, but were always in the *ſame infinite* ſtate, is like ſeeking the cauſe of that, which can have no cauſe, or aſking, *what* it is that *contains* infinity.

But, to derive the wiſdom and goodneſs of God from the directions he receives from the *Relations* of things, becauſe our wiſdom and goodneſs are directed by them, is as weak and vain, as to found his *knowledge* upon *ideas*, becauſe our knowledge is *neceſſarily* founded upon them.

When therefore it is ſaid, *Infinite wiſdom can have no commands, but what are founded on the unalterable reaſon of things;* it might as juſtly have been ſaid, an *infinite Creator* can have no *power* of creating, but what is founded on the *unalterable nature* of creatures.

For the *reaſon* of things, is juſt as unalterable, as the *nature* of creatures. And if the reaſons and relations of things be nothing elſe but their *manner* of exiſtence,

iſtence, or the *ſtate* of their nature, certainly the relations of things muſt have the ſame *beginning*, and the ſame *alterable* or unalterable nature, as the things from whence they flow. Unleſs it can be ſaid, that a thing may exiſt in *ſuch a manner*, though it does not exiſt at all.

Nothing is more certain, than that the relations of things are only the *particular ſtate* of their nature, or *manner* of exiſtence; there can therefore no eternal and unalterable relations exiſt, but of things that eternally and unalterably exiſt. Unleſs a thing may be ſaid to exiſt eternally and unalterably in ſuch a particular *ſtate* of nature, or *manner* of exiſtence, and yet have no eternal exiſtence.

When therefore it is ſaid again, *The Will of God is always determined by the nature*

nature and reaſon of things—It is the ſame as if it were ſaid, the *Omnipotence* of God is always determined by the *nature* of *cauſes* and *effects*. For, as all cauſes and effects are what they are, and *owe* their *nature* to the omnipotence of God, ſo the relations of things are what they are, and owe their nature to the Wiſdom and Will of God.

Nor does this dependance of the relations of things on the *Will* of God deſtroy the nature of relations, or make them doubtful, any more than the exiſtence of things, depending on the *Power* of God, deſtroys the certainty of their exiſtence, or renders it doubtful. For as God cannot make things to exiſt, and not to exiſt at the ſame time, though their exiſtence depends upon his *Power*, ſo neither can he make things

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to have ſuch relations, and yet not to have ſuch relations at the ſame time, though their relations depend upon his *Will.*

So that, the aſcribing the relations of things to the Will of God, from whence alone they can proceed, brings no uncertainty to thoſe duties or rules of life, which flow from ſuch relations, but leaves the ſtate of nature, with all its relations, and the duties which flow from them, in the greateſt certainty, ſo long as nature itſelf is continued; and, when that either *ceaſes entirely*, or is only *altered*, it is not to be wondered at, if all its relations ceaſe, or are altered with it.—

But, *Dare any one ſay, that God's Laws are not founded on the eternal reaſon of things?*

I dare ſay it, with the ſame aſſurance,

as that his *Exiſtence* is not founded on the *eternal exiſtence* of things. And, it is the ſame extravagance to ſay, that God's laws are founded on the *eternal reaſons* of things, as to ſay, that his *power* is founded on the *eternal capacities* of things. For the *capacities* of things have juſt the ſame *ſolidity* and *eternity*, as the relations of things have; and are juſt ſuch *independent realities* as they are: and are juſt the ſame *proper materials* to found the omnipotence of God upon, as the relations of things are to found his infinite wiſdom upon.

And, as we can ſay, that the *Omnipotence* of God, in preſerving and ſupporting the creation, will certainly act *ſuitably* to its ſelf, and *conſiſtent* with that omnipotence which firſt made things be what they are, and put nature into ſuch a ſtate of

cauſes

cauſes and effects as it is in; ſo we can ſay, that the *infinite Wiſdom* of God, in giving laws to the world, will act *ſuitably* to its ſelf, and *conſiſtent* with that wiſdom which at firſt made the *nature* and *relations* of the rational world be what they are.

But then, as the *Omnipotence* of God, though it acts ſuitably to the laws and ſtate of the creation, and the nature of cauſes and effects, which it firſt ordained, yet cannot be ſaid to be *founded* upon the nature of cauſes and effects; becauſe neither cauſes nor effects have any nature, but what they *owe* to omnipotence; ſo, the infinite *Wiſdom* of God, though in giving laws to the world, it acts *ſuitably* to the natures and relations of rational beings, yet cannot be ſaid to be *founded* upon ſuch relations;

tions; becauſe ſuch relations are the *effects* of the divine wiſdom, and owe their exiſtence to it.

And the *reaſon* or *relations* of things ſhew God's *antecedent* wiſdom, and are effects of it, juſt as the nature of *cauſes* and *effects* ſhew his *antecedent* power, and are the effects of it. And as he is infinitely powerful, but not from the *nature* of cauſes and effects; ſo he is infinitely wiſe, but not from the *reaſon* and *nature* of things.

Again, if God be *infinite* wiſdom, then his wiſdom cannot be founded on the relations of things; unleſs things *finite*, and relations that began to be, can be the foundation of that wiſdom which is infinite, and could not begin to be.

And to aſk, What the infinite wiſdom of God can be founded upon, if it be not

founded

founded upon the *natures* and *relations* of things, is the ſame abſurdity as to aſk, How God's wiſdom could be *without* a beginning, if we cannot tell *how* it *began?* For if his wiſdom be infinite, it can no more be founded upon any thing, or have any reaſon of its exiſtence, than it can have any thing before it.

Therefore to aſk, *what* it is founded upon, when it can have no foundation upon *any thing*, is aſking, what an *independent* Being is dependent upon, or *how* that began, which could have *no* beginning?

And to aſk the reaſon or foundation of *any one* of the divine attributes, is the ſame as aſking the reaſon or foundation of them all. And to ſeek for the reaſon or foundation of *all* the divine attributes,

butes, is ſeeking for the *Cauſe* of God's exiſtence.

And as we do not come at God's exiſtence, till we come to the *end* of *cauſes*, ſo nothing that is divine, can be attributed to any cauſe.

Nor is it any more a contradiction to ſay, there is ſomething whoſe nature is without any cauſe or foundation of its exiſtence, than to ſay ſomething exiſts without ever *beginning* to exiſt. For as nothing can have a beginning, but as it proceeds from ſome cauſe; ſo that, which can have no beginning, can have no cauſe. If therefore the divine wiſdom ever *began* to be *infinite*, and we could know when that beginning was; we ſhould have ſome pretence to ſearch for *that*, upon which its infinity was *founded*;

founded; but if it never could begin to be, then to ſeek for its reaſon, or foundation, is ſeeking for its beginning.

It may be aſked, Is there then no *reaſon* or *nature* of things? Yes; as certainly as there are things. But the nature and reaſon of things, conſidered *independently* of the divine Will, or *without* it, have no more *obligation* in them, than a *divine worſhip* conſidered independently of, and without any regard to the *exiſtence* of God. For the *Will* of God is as abſolutely neceſſary to found all *moral obligation* upon, as the exiſtence of God is neceſſary to be the foundation of religious worſhip. And the fitneſs of *moral obligations*, without the *Will* of God, is only like the fitneſs of a *religious* worſhip without the *exiſtence* of God.

And

And it is as juſt to ſay, that he deſtroys the *reaſon* of religion and piety, who founds it upon the nature and exiſtence of God, as to ſay, he ſaps the foundation of moral obligations, who founds them upon the Will of God. And as religion cannot be juſtly or ſolidly defended, but by ſhewing its connexion with, and dependance upon, God's exiſtence; ſo neither can moral obligations be aſſerted with ſtrength and reaſon, but by ſhewing them to be the Will of God.

It may again be aſked, Can God make that fit in *its ſelf*, which is in *its ſelf abſolutely* unfit to be done?

This queſtion conſiſts of improper terms. For God's Will no more makes actions to be fit *in themſelves*, than it

makes

makes *things* to exiſt *in, or of themſelves.* No things, nor any actions, have any *abſolute* fitneſs, and in *themſelves.*

A *gift*, a *blow*, the making a *wound*, or *ſhedding* of *blood*, conſidered in themſelves, have no *abſolute* fitneſs, but are fit or unfit according to any variety of incidental circumſtances.

When therefore God, by his Will, makes any thing fit to be done, he does not make the thing fit in *its ſelf*, which is juſt in the *ſame ſtate* conſidered in *its ſelf*, as it was before; but, it becomes fit for the perſon to do it, becauſe he can only be happy, or do that which is fit for him to do, by doing the Will of God.

For inſtance, the *bare eating* a fruit, conſidered in *its ſelf*, is neither fit nor unfit. If a fruit be appointed by God

for our food and nouriſhment, then it is as fit to eat it, as to preſerve our lives. If a fruit be poiſonous, then it is as unfit to eat it, as to commit ſelf-murder. If eating of a fruit be prohibited by an expreſs order of God, then it is as unfit to eat it, as to eat our own damnation.

But in none of theſe inſtances is the eating or not eating, conſidered in *its ſelf*, *fit* or *unfit*; but has all its fitneſs, or unfitneſs, from ſuch circumſtances, as are entirely owing to the Will of God.

Suppoſing, therefore, God to require a perſon to do ſomething, which, according to his preſent circumſtances, *without* that command, he ought not to do, God does not make that which is *abſolutely* unfit in *itſelf*, fit to be done; but only adds *new circumſtances* to an action, that

that is neither fit nor unfit, moral nor immoral in *itself*, but *becauſe* of its circumſtances.

To inſtance, in the caſe of *Abraham* required to ſacrifice his ſon. The killing of a man is neither good nor bad, conſidered *abſolutely* in *its ſelf*. It was unlawful for *Abraham* to kill his ſon, becauſe of the *circumſtances* he was in with regard to his ſon. But when the divine Command was given, *Abraham* was in a *new ſtate;* the action had *new circumſtances;* and then it was as lawful for *Abraham* to kill his ſon, as it was lawful for God to require any man's life, either by *ſickneſs*, or any *other means* he ſhould pleaſe to appoint.

And it had been as unlawful for *Abraham* to have diſobeyed God in this extraordinary command, as to have

curſed God at any *ordinary calamity* of providence.—

Again, it is objected, *If there be nothing right or wrong, good or bad, antecedently and independently of the Will of God, there can be no reaſon, why God ſhould will, or command one thing, rather than another.*

It is anſwered, *firſt*, That all goodneſs, and all poſſible perfection, is as *eternal* as God, and as *eſſential* to him as his exiſtence. And to ſay, that they are either *antecedent* or *conſequent*, *dependent* or *independent* of his Will, would be equally abſurd. To aſk, therefore, whether there be not ſomething right and wrong, antecedent to the Will of God, to render his Will *capable* of being right, is as abſurd, as to aſk for ſome antecedent cauſe of his exiſtence, that he

he may be proved to exiſt neceſſarily. And to aſk, how God can be good, if there be not ſomething good independently of him, is aſking how he can be infinite, if there be not ſomething infinite independently of him. And, to ſeek for any other *ſource* or *reaſon* of the divine Goodneſs, beſides the divine Nature, is like ſeeking for ſome external cauſe, and help of the divine omnipotence.

The goodneſs and wiſdom, therefore, by which God is wiſe and good, and to which all his works of wiſdom and goodneſs are owing, are neither *antecedent*, nor *conſequent* to his Will.—

Secondly, Nothing is more certain, than that all *moral Obligations* and *Duties*, of creatures towards one another, *began* with the exiſtence of moral creatures.

This is as certain, as that all *phyſical relations*, and corporeal qualities and effects *began* with the exiſtence of bodies.

As therefore nothing has the nature of a cauſe or effect, nothing has any quality of any kind in bodies, but what is entirely owing to matter ſo created and conſtituted by the *Will* of God; ſo, it is equally certain, that no actions have any *moral qualities*, but what are wholly owing to that ſtate and nature in which they are created by the Will of God.

Moral obligations, therefore, of creatures, have the ſame *origin*, and the *ſame reaſon*, that natural qualities and effects have in the corporeal world, *viz. the ſole Will of God.* And, as in a different ſtate of matter, bodies would have had different qualities and effects; ſo, in a

different ſtate of rational beings, there would be different moral obligations; and nothing could be right or good in their behaviour, but what began then to be right and good, becauſe they then began to exiſt in ſuch a ſtate and condition of life. And, as their ſtate and condition could have no other cauſe or reaſon of its exiſtence, but the ſole Will of God, ſo the cauſe and reaſon of right and wrong, in ſuch a ſtate, muſt be equally owing to the Will of God.

The pretended *abſolute independent fitneſſes*, or *unfitneſſes* of actions, therefore, *in themſelves*, are vain *abſtractions*, and philoſophical *jargon*; ſerving no ends of morality; but only helping people to wrangle and diſpute away that ſincere obedience to God, which is their only happineſs. But, to make theſe imagi-

nary

nary *abſolute fitneſſes* the *common Law* both of God and man, is ſtill more extravagant. For, if the *circumſtances* of actions, give them their *moral nature*, ſurely God muſt firſt be in *our* circumſtances, before that, which is a law to us, can be the ſame law to him.

And, if a father may require that of a ſon, which his ſon, becauſe of his *different ſtate*, cannot require of his brother; ſurely that, which God may require of us, may be as different from that, which a father may require of a ſon, as God is different from a father.

To ſay, that the *reaſon* of things is the ſame law to God as it is to us, is ſaying, that God is in the *ſame ſtate*, with *regard* to the nature of things, as we are. For, as things are a law to us, becauſe we are in *ſuch* a ſtate; if they be

the

the *ſame law* to God, it muſt be, becauſe God is in the ſame ſtate as we are.

Again, if God be as much under a law as we are, than he is as much under *authority*; for law can no more be without authority, than without a lawgiver. And if God and we are under the *ſame law*, we muſt be under the *ſame authority*.

But as God cannot be under any law in common with us, his creatures, any more than he can be of the ſame rank or order with us; ſo neither can he be under any law at all, any more than he can be under any authority at all.

For that, which is the *Rule*, or *Reaſon* of God's actions, is no more different from his own Will, than his power is different from his Will.

And though God is not to be looked upon as an *arbitrary Being*, in the ſenſe of thoſe, who will not diſtinguiſh arbitrary from *humour* and *caprice*; yet, in a better and only true ſenſe of the word, when applied to God, he muſt be affirmed to be an arbitrary Being, who acts only *from himſelf*, from his *own Will*, and according to his *own pleaſure*.

And we have no more reaſon to be afraid to be left to a God without a law, than to a God that had no beginning; or to be left to his Will and pleaſure, than to be left under the protection and care of a Being, who is all love, and mercy, and goodneſs. For, as the exiſtence of God, as ſuch, neceſſarily implies the exiſtence of all perfection; ſo the Will of God, as ſuch, neceſſarily implies the

willing

willing every thing, that *all perfection* can will.

And as the exiſtence of God, becauſe it contains all perfection, cannot for that reaſon have any external Cauſe; ſo the Will of God, becauſe it is *all perfection*, cannot, for that reaſon, have any external *Rule* or *direction*. But his own Will is Wiſdom, and his Wiſdom is his Will. His Goodneſs is arbitrary, and his Arbitrarineſs is goodneſs.

To bring God therefore into a ſtate of moral obligation and ſubjection to any external *Law* or *Rule*, as we are, has all the abſurdity of ſuppoſing him to be a finite, dependant, temporary, imperfect, improveable, governable Being, as we are.——

The truth of the matter is this; Reaſon is in God and man, as Power is in God

God and man. And, as the divine *Power* has ſome degree of likeneſs to human power, yet with an *infinite* difference from it; ſo that perfection, which we call *Reaſon* in God, has ſome degree of likeneſs to reaſon as it is in man, yet is *infinitely* and beyond all conception different from it.

Nor can any one ſhew, that we enjoy Reaſon in a *higher degree* in reſpect of God, than we enjoy power; or that the *manner*, or *light* of our Reaſon, bears any greater likeneſs to the light and knowledge of God, than the *manner* and *extent* of our power bears to the omnipotence of God.

And as our enjoyment of power is ſo limited, ſo imperfect, ſo ſuperficial, as to be ſcarce ſufficient to tell us, what power is, much leſs what omnipotence

is;

is; ſo our ſhare of Reaſon is ſo ſmall, and we enjoy it in ſo imperfect a manner, that we can ſcarce think or talk intelligibly of it, or ſo much as define our own faculties of reaſoning.

CHAP. II.

Shewing, from the ſtate *and* relation *between God and man, that human Reaſon cannot poſſibly be a competent judge of the* fitneſs *and* reaſonableneſs *of God's proceedings with mankind, either as to the* time, *or* matter, *or* manner, *of any external Revelation.*

SINCE it has frequently been laid down as an undeniable Rule of God's actions, that he muſt, if he be a wiſe and good being, act according to the relation he ſtands in towards his creatures; I proceed, *upon this principle,* to prove the incapacity of *human Reaſon,* to judge

judge *truly* of God's proceedings in regard to *divine Revelation.*

For, if the fitneſs of actions *reſult from the nature and relations* of beings, then the *fitneſs* of God's actions, as he is an *omniſcient Creator* and *Governor*, to whom every thing is *eternally foreknown*, over beings endued with *our freedom of will*, muſt be to us very *incomprehenſible.*

We are not ſo much as capable of comprehending, by our own Reaſon, the *poſſibility* of this relation, or how the foreknowledge of God can conſiſt with the free agency of creatures. We know that God foreknows all things, with the ſame certainty as we know there is a God. And, if *ſelf-conſciouſneſs* be an infallible proof of our own exiſtence, it proves, with the ſame certainty, the freedom of our will. And hence it is, that

we

we have a full assurance of the consistency of God's fore-knowledge with freedom of will.

Now this *incomprehensible* relation between an *eternally fore-knowing Creator* and *Governor*, and his free creatures, is the *relation* from whence arises the *fitness* of God's providence over us. But if the *relation* itself be incomprehensible, then those actions that have their *fitness* from it, must surely be incomprehensible. Nothing can be fit for God to do, either in *Creation* or *Providence*, but what has its fitness founded in his own *Fore-knowledge* of every thing that would follow, from *every kind* of creation, and *every manner* of providence. But if nothing can be fit, but because it is according to *this fore-knowledge* of *every thing* that would follow, from *every kind*

of

of creation, and *every manner* of providence; then we have the utmoſt certainty, that the *fitneſs* of God's actions, as a *fore-knowing Creator* and *Governor* of free agents, muſt be founded upon *reaſons*, which we cannot *poſſibly* know any thing of.

And a *Child*, that has but juſt learned to ſpeak, is as well qualified to ſtate the fitneſs of the laws of *matter* and *motion*, by which the whole *vegetable* world is preſerved, as the wiſeſt of men are qualified to comprehend, or ſtate the fitneſs of the methods, or proceedings, which a *fore-knowing Providence* preſerves over free agents. For every reaſon, on which *the fitneſs* of ſuch a Providence is founded, is not only *unknown* to us, but by a neceſſity of nature *impoſſible* to be known by us.

For

For, if the *fitneſs* of God's acting in this, or that manner, be founded in his *fore-knowledge* of every thing that would *happen*, from *every poſſible way* of acting, *then*, it is juſt as abſolutely impoſſible for us to know the reaſons, on which the fitneſs of his actions is founded, as it is impoſſible for us to be omniſcient.

What human Reaſon can tell, what kind of beings it is *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to create, on the account of his own *eternal Fore-knowledge?* And yet, this is as poſſible, as for the ſame Reaſon to tell, how God ought to govern beings already created, on the account of his own eternal fore-knowledge: and yet, God can neither *create*, nor *govern* his creatures, as it is *fit* and *reaſonable* he ſhould, unleſs he creates and governs them in *this* or *that* manner, on the *account*

count of his own fore-knowledge. And therefore, if he act *like* himſelf, and *worthy* of his own nature, the fitneſs of his proceedings muſt for this very reaſon, *becauſe* they are fit, be vaſtly *above* our comprehenſion.

Who can tell what *different kinds* of rational creatures, diſtinguiſhed by variety of natures, and faculties, it is fit and reaſonable for God to create, becauſe he *eternally foreſaw* what would be the *effect* of ſuch different creations? Who can explain the *fitneſs* of that vaſt *variety* there is amongſt rational creatures of the *ſame ſpecies*, in their rational faculties, or ſhew that all their different faculties ought to be as they are? And yet, the *fitneſs* of this providence has its *certain reaſon* in the divine fore-knowledge;

ledge; and it could not be fit, but because of it.

Who can tell what *degree* of Reason rational creatures ought to enjoy, *because* they are rational; or what degrees of *new* and *revealed* knowledge it is fit and reasonable for God to give, or not give them, because they seem, or seem not to themselves to want it? are disposed, or not disposed, to receive it? For, as mankind cannot tell why it was *fit* and *reasonable* for God to create them of such a *kind*, and *degree*, as they are of; so neither can they tell how God ought, or ought not to add to their natural knowledge, and make them as *differently accountable* for the use of revealed rules of life, as for the use of their natural faculties.

And

And as the reaſon, why God created them of *ſuch* a *kind*, and with *ſuch faculties*, was becauſe of his own fore-knowledge of the *effects* of ſuch a creation; ſo, if ever he do reveal to them any *ſupernatural* knowledge, both *the doing it*, the *time*, and *matter*, and *manner* of it, muſt have its *fitneſs* in his own *eternal Fore-knowledge* of the effects of ſuch a Revelation.

The reaſons therefore, on which the *fitneſs* of this or that Revelation, *why*, or *when*, of *what matter*, in *what manner*, and to *whom* it is to be made, muſt, from the nature and reaſon of things, be as unſearchable by us, as the reaſons of *this* or *that* creation of rational beings, at ſuch a *time*, of ſuch a *kind*, in ſuch a *ſtate*.

This may help us to an eaſy ſolution of

of theſe *unreaſonable* queſtions, which are ſo often propoſed——

If the deſign of God in communicating any thing of himſelf to men were their happineſs, would not that deſign have obliged him, who at all times alike deſires their happineſs, to have at all times alike communicated it to them? If God always act for the good of his creatures, what reaſon can be aſſigned, why he ſhould not from the beginning have diſcovered ſuch things as make for their good, but defer the doing it, till the time of Tiberius? *Since the ſooner this was done, the greater would his goodneſs appear.*

And again, *How is it conſiſtent with the notion of God's being univerſally benevolent, not to have revealed it to all his children, when all had equal need of it? Was it not as eaſy for*

for him to have communicated it to all nations, as to any one nation or perſon? Or in all languages, as in one.

Now, all this is fully anſwered by one great and fundamental principle—

For, if the relations between things and perſons, and the fitneſs reſulting from thence, be the ſole Rule of God's actions; then, the *ſole rule* or reaſon of God's revealing any thing to any man, or men, at any time, muſt have its *fitneſs reſulting* from the divine Fore-knowledge of the effects of *ſuch* a revelation, at *ſuch* a time, and on *ſuch* perſons. If God do not act thus, he does not act according to the *relation* betwixt a *fore-knowing Creator*, and his free creatures. But if he do act according to a *fitneſs reſulting* from this *relation*, and make or do not make revelations, according to his own fore-

knowledge

knowledge of the fitneſs of times, and perſons for them; then, to aſk, how a God, *always equally* good, can make a Revelation at *any* time, and not make the *ſame* at *all* times, is as abſurd as to aſk, how a God, always equally good, can reveal that at one time, becauſe it is a *proper* time for it, and not reveal it at any other time, though every other time is *improper* for it?

God's goodneſs, directed by his own fore-knowledge of the *fitneſs* of times, and of the *ſtate* and *actions* of free agents, deferred a certain Revelation to the time of *Tiberius*; becauſe he *foreſaw* it would then be an act of the *greateſt* goodneſs, and have its *beſt effects* upon the world. To aſk therefore, *what reaſon can be aſſigned*, why ſo good and beneficial a Revelation was not *ſooner*, or even from the

beginning made to the world, is aſking, *What reaſon can be aſſigned*, why God is good, and intends the *greateſt* good by what does, or ſtays for the doing any thing, till ſuch time as makes it a greater good than if he had done it ſooner; it is aſking, why God ſhould act according to his *own fore-knowledge* of the *ſtate* and *actions* of *free agents*, and order all things according to a fitneſs reſulting from ſuch a fore-knowledge?

Now, this appealing to God's Fore-knowledge of the ſtate and actions of *free agents*, as the Cauſe of all that is particular in the *time* and *manner* of any revelation, and deducing its fitneſs from thence, cannot be ſaid to be *begging the queſtion* in diſpute; but is reſolving it directly according to the *Rule*, which is laid down for God to act by, which is

this: That *the relations between things and perſons*, and *the fitneſs reſulting from thence*, *muſt be the ſole rule of God's actions, unleſs he be an arbitrary being.*

But if this be the *ſole Rule*, then God in giving any revelation muſt act, as the *relation* betwixt a *fore-knowing* Creator and his *free* creatures requires; and his actions muſt have their *fitneſs reſulting* from his fore-knowledge of the *ſtate* and *actions* of free agents. But if this be God's ſole rule, made neceſſary to him from the nature of things, then to aſk why *this* or *that* revelation was given, *only* at *ſuch* a time, is to aſk, why God *only* does that which is *fit* for him to do? And to aſk, why not the ſame revelation at any other time, is aſking, why God does not do that, which it is *not fit* for him to do?

But, *Was it not as eaſy for God to have communicated it to all nations, as to any one nation or perſon? Or in all languages, as in any one?*—This argument is built upon the *truth* and *reaſonableneſs* of this ſuppoſition, That God does things becauſe they are *eaſy*, or forbears things becauſe they are *difficult* to be performed. For, it can be no argument, that God ought to have revealed ſuch things to *all* nations or perſons, becauſe it was as *eaſy* to him, as to do it to *any one* nation or perſon; unleſs it be ſuppoſed, that the *eaſineſs* of a thing is a reaſon why God does it, and the difficulty of a thing a reaſon why he does not do it. But, if this ſuppoſition be very abſurd, then the argument founded upon it muſt be liable to the ſame charge.

It is as eaſy to God to make all men con-

conformable to his Will, as to make *trees* and *plants* grow according to his pleaſure; but though it is as eaſy, yet it is not as *fit* and *reaſonable* for God to do all by *power* in the rational world, as he does all by power in the vegetable. It is as eaſy for God to deſtroy all ſinful natures, as to preſerve them in being; and if he do one rather than the other, it is not becauſe one is *eaſier* than the other, but becauſe the perfections of his own nature move him to it.

But if God do things, not becauſe they are eaſy, but becauſe they are infinitely good and fit to be done, and founded in the *relation* of a fore-knowing Creator to his free creatures; then, the reaſon why God has afforded different revelations to different ages and perſons is this, That his *manner* of revealing every

every thing might be *worthy* of his own *fore-knowledge* of the effects of it; and that every thing, which is particular in the *time* or *manner* of any revelation, might have its *fitneſs reſulting* from the *relation* betwixt a good God and his creatures, whoſe *changing* ſtate, *different* conduct, *tempers* and *actions* are all eternally fore-known by him.

Again; it is objected, that a divine Revelation muſt either be the effect of *Juſtice*, or elſe of *Mercy* and *free Goodneſs*; but in either of theſe caſes it ought to be *univerſal*; for juſtice muſt be done to all. But, if it be the effect of *mercy* and *free goodneſs*, it is aſked, *How a being can be denominated merciful and good, who is ſo only to a few, but cruel and unmerciful to the reſt?*

It is anſwered, That there is neither

Juſtice

Juſtice in God without Mercy, nor *Mercy* without Juſtice; and to aſcribe a *Revelation* to either of them ſeparately, in *contradiſtinction* to the other, has no more truth or reaſon in it, than to aſcribe the *Creation* ſeparately either to the *Wiſdom*, or *Power* of God, in contradiſtinction to the other.

Secondly, ☞ A divine revelation is not owing to the *juſtice* or *free goodneſs* of God, either *ſeparately* or *jointly* conſidered; but to the goodneſs, mercy, and juſtice of God, *governed* and *directed* by his eternal Fore-knowledge of all the effects of every revelation, at any, or all times.

God ordains a Revelation in this or that manner, time, and place; not becauſe it is a *juſtice* that he cannot refuſe, nor

nor becauſe it is matter of *favour* or *free* Goodneſs, and therefore may be given in any manner at pleaſure; but becauſe he has the whole *duration* of human things, the whole *race* of mankind, the whole *order* of human changes and events, the whole *combination* of all cauſes and effects of human tempers, all the *actions* of free agents, and *all the conſequences* of every revelation plainly in his ſight; and according to this eternal *Fore-knowledge*, every revelation receives every thing that is *particular* in it, either as to *time*, *matter*, *manner*, or *place*.

All complaints therefore, about that which is *particular* or *ſeemingly* partial in the time and manner of any revelation, are very unjuſtifiable; and ſhew, that we are diſcontent at God's proceedings, becauſe

becauſe he acts like himſelf, does what is *beſt* and *fitteſt* to be done, and governs the world, not according to our weak imaginations, but according to his own infinite perfections.

We will not allow a Providence to be *right*, unleſs we can comprehend and explain the reaſonableneſs of all its ſteps; and yet it could not *poſſibly* be right, unleſs its proceedings were as much *above* our comprehenſion, as our wiſdom is *below* that which is infinite.

For, if the *relations* of *things* and *perſons*, and the *fitneſs* reſulting from thence, be the *Rule* of God's actions; then, all the revelations that come from God, muſt have their *fitneſs* reſulting from the relation his Fore-knowledge bears to the *various ſtates*, *conditions*, *tempers*, and *actions* of free agents, and the

various

various effects of every manner of revelation.

But, if God cannot act worthy of himself, in any manner of revelation, unless he acts according to a fitness resulting from this relation; then, we have the highest certainty, that he must act by a *Rule* that lies *out of our sight;* and that his Providence in this particular must be *incomprehensible* to us, for this very reason, because it has that very fitness, wisdom, and goodness in it, which it ought to have.

CHAP. III.

Shewing, how far human Reaſon is enabled to judge of the reaſonableneſs, truth, *and* certainty *of divine Revelation.*

THE former chapter has plainly ſhewn, from the ſtate and relation between God and man, that we muſt be ſtrangers to the true reaſons on which a divine Revelation is founded, both as to its *time*, *matter*, and *manner*.

But it is here objected, *If God, by reaſon of his own perfections, muſt be thus myſterious and incomprehenſible, both in the matter and manner of divine Revelation; how*

how can we know what revelations we are to receive as divine? How can we be blamed for rejecting this, or receiving that, if we cannot comprehend the reaſons on which every Revelation is founded, both as to its matter and manner?

Juſt as we may be blamed for ſome notions of God, and commended for others, though we can have no notions of God, but ſuch as are *myſterious* and *inconceivable.* We are not without ſome natural capacity of judging right of God, of finding out his perfections, and proving what is or is not worthy to be aſcribed to him. Yet, what the divine perfections are in themſelves, what they imply and contain in their own nature and manner of exiſtence, is altogether myſterious and inconceivable by us, at preſent. If therefore a man may be blameable

blameable or commendable for his right or wrong belief of a God; then a man may be accountable for a right or wrong belief of ſuch matters, as are in their own nature too myſterious for his comprehenſion. And, though a man knows the reaſons of a divine Revelation, either as to its *matter* or *manner*, as imperfectly as he knows the divine nature; yet he may be as liable to account for believing *falſe revelations*, as for *idolatry*; and as full of guilt for rejecting a *true Revelation*, as for denying the only *true God*.

Secondly, Though we are inſufficient for comprehending the *reaſons*, on which the particular *matter* or *manner* of any divine Revelation is founded; yet we may be ſo far ſufficient judges of the *reaſons* for *receiving* or not *receiving* a revelation

velation as divine, as to make our conduct therein juſtly accountable to God.

For, if God can ſhew a Revelation to proceed from him by the *ſame undeniable* evidence, as he ſhews the *Creation* to be his *work;* if he can make himſelf as viſible in a *particular extraordinary* manner, as he is by his *general* and *ordinary* Providence, then, though we are as unqualified to judge of the myſteries of a *Revelation*, as we are to judge of the myſteries in *Creation* and *Providence*; yet, we may be as fully obliged to receive a Revelation, as to acknowledge the Creation to be the work of God; and as highly criminal for diſbelieving it, as for denying a general Providence.

Adam, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Moſes* were very incompetent judges of the reaſons on which the particular Revelations

made to them were founded; but this did not hinder their ſufficient aſſurance, that ſuch Revelations came from God; becauſe, they were proved to come from God in the ſame manner, and for the ſame reaſons, as the Creation is proved to be the Work of God.

And as *Adam* and *Noah* muſt ſee every thing *wonderful*, *myſterious*, and *above their comprehenſions* in thoſe new worlds, into which they were introduced by God; ſo they could no more expect that he ſhould require nothing of them, but what they would enjoin themſelves, than that their own *frame*, the *nature* of the creation, the *providence* of God, or the *ſtate* of human life, ſhould be exactly as they would have it.

And if their poſterity will let no *meſſages* from heaven, no *prophecies* and *miracles*

racles perſuade them, that God can call them to any duties, but ſuch as they muſt enjoin themſelves; or to the belief of any doctrines, but ſuch as their own minds can ſuggeſt; nor to any methods of changing their preſent ſtate of weakneſs and diſorder for a happy immortality but ſuch as ſuit their own *taſte*, *temper*, and *way of reaſoning*; it is, becauſe they are grown ſenſeleſs of *the myſteries of creation* and *providence*, with which they are ſurrounded, and forget the awful prerogative of *infinite wiſdom* over the weakeſt, loweſt rank of intelligent beings.

For the *Excellence* of a Revelation is to be acknowledged by us, for the ſame reaſon that we are to acknowledge the excellence of Creation and Providence; not becauſe they are wholly according to human conception, and have no myſteries,

ſteries, but becauſe they are proved to be of God.

And a Revelation is to be received as coming from God, not becauſe of its internal excellence, or becauſe we judge it to be worthy of God; but becauſe God has declared it to be his, in as *plain* and *undeniable* a manner, as he has declared *Creation* and *Providence* to be his. For, though no Revelation can come from God, but what is truly worthy of him, and full of every internal excellence; yet, what is truly *worthy* of God to be *revealed*, cannot poſſibly be known by us, but by a Revelation from himſelf.

And, as we can only know what is worthy of God in Creation, by knowing what he has created; ſo we can no other way poſſibly know what is worthy of God to be revealed, but by a Revelation.

tion. And he that pretends, independently of any Revelation, to ſhew *how*, and in what manner God ought to make a Revelation worthy of himſelf, is as great a *Viſionary*, as he that ſhould pretend, independently of the Creation, or without learning any thing from it, to ſhew how God ought to have proceeded in it, to make it worthy of himſelf. For, as God alone knows how to create worthy of himſelf, and nothing can poſſibly be proved to be worthy to be created by him, but becauſe he has already created it; ſo God alone knows what is worthy of himſelf in a Revelation, and nothing can poſſibly be proved worthy to be revealed by him, but becauſe he has already revealed it.

Were it allowed that a Revelation cannot be divine, if it contain any thing

myſte-

myſterious, whoſe fitneſs and neceſſity cannot be explained by human Reaſon, then neither *Creation* nor *Providence* can be proved to be divine; for they are both of them *more myſterious* than the Chriſtian revelation. And Revelation itſelf is *therefore* myſterious, becauſe Creation and Providence cannot be delivered from myſtery. And, were it poſſible for man to comprehend the reaſons, on which the *manner* of the Creation and divine Providence are founded, then Revelation might be without myſteries.

But, if the *Myſteries* in Revelation be owing to that, which is, by the nature of things incomprehenſible in Creation and Providence, then, it is very *unreaſonable* to reject Revelation, becauſe it has that which it muſt neceſſarily have; not from itſelf, but from the nature and ſtate of things

things. And much worſe is it to deny Revelation to be divine, for ſuch a reaſon, as makes it equally fit to deny *Creation* and *Providence* to be of God.

For, if every thing be *arbitrary*, whoſe *fitneſs and expedience* human Reaſon cannot *prove* and *explain*, then ſurely an *inviſible over-ruling Providence*, that orders all things in a manner, and for reaſons known only to its ſelf; that ſubjects human life, and human affairs to what changes it pleaſes; that confounds the beſt laid deſigns, and makes great effects ariſe from folly and imprudence; that gives the race not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong; that brings good men into affliction, and makes the wicked proſperous; ſurely *ſuch a Providence* muſt be highly arbitrary.

And, therefore, if this argument be to be

be admitted, it leads directly to *Atheiſm*, and brings us under a greater neceſſity of rejecting this notion of divine Providence, on the account of its *myſteries*, than of rejecting a Revelation that is myſterious in any of its doctrines. And if God cannot be ſaid to deal with us as rational agent, if he requires any thing of us, that *our Reaſon* cannot prove to be neceſſary, ſurely he cannot be ſaid to deal with us as rational and moral agents, if he over-rule our perſons and affairs, and diſappoint our counſels; make weakneſs proſperous, and wiſdom unſucceſsful, in a *ſecret* and *inviſible* manner, and for reaſons and ends that we have no means of knowing.

And, if it may be ſaid, To what purpoſe has he given us Reaſon, if that be not ſolely to give laws to us? ſurely it

may

may better be ſaid, To what purpoſe has he given us Reaſon to take care of ourſelves, to provide for our happineſs, to prepare *proper* means for certain ends, if there be *an over-ruling Providence*, that changes the *natural courſe* of things; that confounds the beſt laid deſigns; and diſappoints the wiſeſt counſels?

☞ There is nothing therefore *half ſo myſterious* in *the Chriſtian revelation*, conſidered in itſelf, as there is in that *inviſible Providence*, which all muſt hold, who believe a God. And though there is enough plain in Providence, to excite the admiration of humble and pious minds, yet it has often been a rock of *Atheiſm* to thoſe, who make *their own Reaſon* the meaſure of wiſdom.

Again, Though the *Creation* plainly declares the glory, and wiſdom, and goodneſs

neſs of God; yet it has *more myſteries* in it, more things whoſe fitneſs, expedience, and reaſonableneſs, human Reaſon cannot comprehend, than are to be found in Scripture.

If therefore he reaſon right, who ſays, *If there may be ſome things in a true Religion, whoſe fitneſs and expedience we cannot ſee, why not others? Nay, why not the whole? ſince that would make God's laws all of a piece. And, if the having of theſe things be no proof of its falſhood, how can any things fit and expedient* [*which no Religion is without*] *be a proof of the truth of any one Religion?* If I ſay, this be right reaſoning, then it may be ſaid, *If there be things in the Creation, whoſe fitneſs we cannot ſee, why not others? Nay, why not the whole? ſince that would make all God's works of a piece. And if the being of ſuch things as theſe*

theſe in the Creation be not a proof of its not being divine, how can the fitneſs and expedience of any Creation prove, that it is the work of God?

Thus does this argument tend wholly to Atheiſm, and concludes with the ſame force againſt *Creation* and *Providence*, as it does againſt Revelation.

The true grounds and reaſons, on which we are to believe a Revelation to be divine, are ſuch external marks and ſigns of God's action and operation, as are a ſufficient proof of it. And if God have no ways of acting that are peculiar and particular to himſelf, and ſuch as ſufficiently prove his action and operation, then Revelation can have no ſufficient proof that it comes from God.

And if a Revelation had no other proof of its Divinity, but ſuch an in-

ternal excellency and fitneſs of its doctrines, as is fully known and approved by *human Reaſon;* ſuch an internal excellency would be ſo far from being a ſufficient proof of its Divinity, that it would be a probable objection againſt it. For it has an appearance of great probability, that God would not make an external Revelation of that *only*, which was *ſufficiently* and fully known without it.

Although, therefore, no Revelation can come from God, whoſe doctrines have not an *internal excellency*, and the *higheſt fitneſs;* yet the non-appearance of ſuch excellency and fitneſs to *our Reaſon*, cannot be a diſproof of its Divinity; becauſe, it is our ignorance of ſuch matters, without Revelation, which is the *true ground and reaſon* of God's revealing any thing to us.

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The Credibility, therefore, of divine Revelation reſts chiefly upon *ſuch external* evidence, as is a ſufficient proof of the divine operation, or interpoſition. If there be no ſuch external evidence poſſible; if God has no ways of acting ſo *peculiar* to himſelf, as to be a *ſufficient* proof of his action, then a Revelation cannot be ſufficiently proved to be divine.

I appeal therefore to the *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, on which Chriſtianity is founded, as a *ſufficient* proof it is a divine Revelation. And ſhall here conſider, what is objected againſt the ſufficiency of this kind of proof.

1. It is objected, That Miracles cannot prove a *falſe*, or *bad* doctrine, to be *true* and *good*; therefore miracles, *as ſuch*, cannot prove the truth of any Revelation.

But, though miracles cannot prove falſe to be true, or bad to be good; yet they may prove, that we ought to receive ſuch doctrines, both as true and good, which we could not know to be true and good without ſuch miracles.

Not becauſe the miracles have any influence upon the things revealed, but becauſe they teſtify the credibility of the Revealer, as having God's teſtimony to the truth of that which he reveals.

If therefore miracles can be a ſufficient proof of God's ſending any perſons to ſpeak in his name, and under his authority; then they may be a ſufficient proof of the truth and divinity of a Revelation, though they cannot prove that which is falſe to be true.

But, *If evil beings can impreſs notions in men's minds as ſtrongly as good beings, and*

cauſe miracles to be done in confirmation of them; is there any way to know to which of the two, notions, thus impreſſed, are owing, but from their nature and tendency, or internal marks of wiſdom and goodneſs?—— And if ſo, Can external proofs carry us any farther than the internal proofs do?

This objection ſuppoſes, that no miracles, *as ſuch*, can be a ſufficient proof of the divinity of a revelation; for this reaſon, becauſe we do not know the extent of that power, which evil ſpirits have, of doing miracles. But this objection is groundleſs. For, granting that we do not know the nature and extent of that power which evil ſpirits may have; yet, if we know *enough* of it to affirm, that the *Creation* is not the work of evil ſpirits; if we can ſecurely appeal to the Creation, as a *ſufficient proof* of God's action

action and operation; then we are fully ſecure in appealing to miracles, as a ſufficient proof of a divine revelation.

For, if the Creation muſt of neceſſity be allowed to be the work of God, notwithſtanding any *unknown degree* of power in evil ſpirits; if we can as certainly aſcribe it to God, as if we really knew there were no *ſuch* ſpirits; then miracles may be as full a proof of the operation, or interpoſition of God, as if we really knew there were no ſuch ſpirits in being.

I do not aſk, Whether the *ſame divine* perfection is neceſſary to foretel ſuch things as are foretold in Scripture, and work ſuch miracles as are there related, as is neceſſary to *create*. I do not aſk, Whether any power leſs than divine can do ſuch things? I only aſk, Whether

there

there be any certainty, that the Creation is the work of God? Whether we can be ſure of the divine operation, from the exiſtence of that creation, which we are acquainted with? Or, Whether we are in any *doubt* or *uncertainty* about it, becauſe we do not know the *true nature* or *degree* of power, that may belong to evil ſpirits?

For, if it can be affirmed with certainty, that the Creation is the work of God, notwithſtanding our uncertainty about the degree of power that may belong to evil ſpirits; then we have the ſame certainty, that the *Prophecies* and *Miracles* recorded in Scripture are to be aſcribed to God, as his doing, notwithſtanding our uncertainty of the power of evil ſpirits.

And this is affirmed, not becauſe *Pro-*

phecies

phecies and *Miracles* require the *ſame degree* of divine power, as to create *ex nihilo*, [for that would be affirming we know not what] but it is affirmed, becauſe the Creation cannot be a *better*, *farther*, or *different* proof of the action or operation of God, than ſuch miracles and prophecies are.

For, every reaſon for aſcribing the creation to God, is the ſame reaſon for aſcribing ſuch miracles and prophecies to God; and every argument againſt the certainty of thoſe miracles and prophecies coming from God, is the ſame argument againſt the certainty of the Creation's being the work of God; for there cannot be more or leſs certainty in one caſe than in the other.

For, if evil ſpirits have ſo the creation in their hands, that by reaſon of their power

power over it, *no miracles* can prove the operation of God, then the operation of God cannot be proved from the Creation itſelf.

For the Creation cannot be proved to be the operation of God, unleſs it can be proved that God *ſtill preſides* over it.

And if *all* that, which is extraordinary and miraculous, may be accounted for without the interpoſition of God; then nothing that is ordinary and common, according to the courſe of nature, can be a proof of the action of God. For there can be no reaſon aſſigned, why that which is *ordinary* ſhould be aſcribed to God, if all that is, or has, or can be *miraculous*, may be aſcribed to evil ſpirits.

Either therefore it muſt be ſaid, that there are or may be miracles, which cannot

not be the effects of evil ſpirits; or elſe, nothing that is ordinary and common can be a proof of the operation of God. For, if nothing miraculous can be an undeniable proof of God's action, nothing created can be a proof of it.

The matter, therefore, ſtands thus: There are, and may be, Miracles, that cannot be aſcribed to evil ſpirits, without aſcribing the Creation to them; and which can no more be doubted to come from God, than we can doubt of his being the Creator of the world. There may be miracles therefore, which, *as ſuch*, and, conſidered *in themſelves*, are as full a proof of the *truth* of that which they atteſt, as the Creation is of the *fitneſs* of that which is created.

And though the *matter* of a Revelation is to be attended to, that we may

fully

fully underſtand it, and be rightly affected with it; yet the reaſon of our receiving it as divine, muſt reſt upon that *external authority*, which ſhews it to be of God.

And the authority of Miracles, ſufficiently plain and apparent, are of themſelves a full and neceſſary reaſon for receiving a Revelation, which, both as to its *matter* and *manner*, would not be approved by us without them.

It ſeems therefore, to be a *needleſs*, and too *great* a conceſſion, which ſome *learned divines* make in this matter, when they grant, that we muſt firſt examine the Doctrines revealed by Miracles, and ſee whether they contain any thing in them *abſurd*, or *unworthy* of God, before we can receive the Miracles as divine. For,

1. Where

1. Where there can be nothing doubted, nor any more required, to make the Miracles ſufficiently plain and evident, there can be no doubt about the truth and goodneſs of the Doctrine they atteſt. Miracles, in ſuch a ſtate as this, are the laſt reſort; they determine for themſelves, and cannot be tried by any thing farther.

And as the *exiſtence* of things is the higheſt and utmoſt evidence of God's having created them, and is not to be tried by *our judgments* about the reaſonableneſs and ends of their creation; ſo a courſe of plain undeniable Miracles, atteſting the truth of a Revelation, is the *higheſt* and *utmoſt* evidence of its coming from God, and is not to be tried by our judgments about the *reaſonableneſs* or *neceſſity* of its doctrines.

And

And this is to be affirmed, not becauſe God is too good to ſuffer us to be brought into ſuch a ſnare, but becauſe we can know nothing of God, if ſuch a courſe of Miracles be not a ſufficient proof of his action and interpoſition. For if Doctrines, revealed by ſuch an *undeniable change* in the natural courſe of things, have not thence a ſufficient proof, that they are divine doctrines; then *no Laws*, that are according to the natural ſtate of things, can have *thence* any proof, that they are *divine laws*.

For if *no courſe* of *miracles* can be of *its ſelf* a ſufficient proof, that *that* which is atteſted by them, is atteſted by God; then no *ſettled, ordinary* ſtate of things can of *its ſelf* be a proof, that *that* which is required by the natural ſtate of things, is required by God.

2. To

2. To try Miracles, ſufficiently plain and evident, by *our judgments* of the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines revealed by them, ſeems to be beginning at the wrong end. For the Doctrines had not been revealed, but becauſe of our ignorance of the *nature* and *reaſonableneſs* of them; nor had the Miracles been wrought, but to *prevent* our *acquieſcing* in our own judgments about the worth and value of them.

3. To ſay, That no Miracles, however plain and evident, are to be received as divine, if they atteſt any Doctrine that appears to *human Reaſon* to be abſurd, or unworthy of God, is very unreaſonable. For what is it that can be called *human Reaſon* in this reſpect? Is it any thing elſe than human opinion? And is there

there any thing that mankind are in greater uncertainty, or more contrary to one another, than in their opinions about what is abſurd, or unworthy of God in religion? And is it not the very end and deſign of a divine Revelation, to help us to a Rule that may put an end to the diviſions of human Reaſon, and furniſh us with an authority for believing ſuch things, as we ſhould not think it reaſonable to believe without it.

And how weak and uſeleſs muſt that Revelation be, which has not ſufficient authority to teach us *new notions* of religion, and perſuade us to believe that to be reaſonable and worthy of God, which we could not believe to be ſo upon a leſs authority.

But if this be the caſe, as it ſeems clearly to be, then we are not to try plain

and evident Miracles of the higheſt kind, by *our judgments* of the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines revealed by them; but Miracles are to be received, as of ſufficient authority to form and govern our opinions about the reaſonableneſs of the doctrines.

It may perhaps be ſaid, though the authority of Miracles is ſufficient to govern our opinions in doctrines that are only myſterious, and above the comprehenſion of our Reaſon, yet that which is plainly and groſly abſurd, or unworthy of God, cannot, nor ought to be received upon any authority of the greateſt Miracles.

This objection is vain and abſurd; it is vain, becauſe it relates to a caſe, that never was the caſe of Miracles; and it is abſurd, becauſe it is providing againſt a caſe

caſe that never can happen to Miracles. For to ſuppoſe any thing in its own nature groſly abſurd, or unworthy of God, to be atteſted with the higheſt evidence of miracles, is as impoſſible and contradictory a ſuppoſition, as to ſuppoſe God to create rational beings wicked in their nature, that they might thereby be of ſervice to the devil. Theſe two ſuppoſitions have not the ſmalleſt difference, either in abſurdity, or impoſſibility.

Again, The hiſtory of magical wonders, and extraordinary things done by evil ſpirits, is no objection againſt the ſufficiency of that proof that ariſes from Miracles. For, the queſtion is not, whether nothing that is extraordinary can be done by evil ſpirits, in any circumſtances, but whether nothing that is

miraculous

miraculous can, as ſuch, be a proof of its being done by God. For theſe two caſes are very conſiſtent; it may be very poſſible for evil ſpirits to do things extraordinary in ſome circumſtances, as where people enter into contracts with them, and reſign themſelves up to their power, and yet that Miracles may, in *other circumſtances*, merely as Miracles, be a ſufficient proof of their being done by God.

Thus the caſe of the *Egyptian magicians*, is ſo far from abating the weight of miracles, that it is a great proof of their authority, conſidered in themſelves. For the *Magicians* could proceed but a little way in their contention with *Moſes*; they were ſoon made to feel his ſuperior power in the ſame manner, as the reſt of the *Egyptians* did, and to confeſs that his Miracles were done by the *Finger of God*.

God. This very inſtance therefore fully ſhews, that Miracles, *as ſuch*, may be a ſufficient proof of God's interpoſition. For if, in the caſe of a contention, the ſuperior power muſt be aſcribed to God, then Miracles as *ſuch*, or of *ſuch a kind*, as having none equal to them, or able to ſtand againſt them, muſt, in ſuch a ſtate, be a ſufficient proof of their being done by God, and give a ſufficient warrant to receive any Doctrine that is atteſted by them.

For, let it be ſuppoſed, that the *Egyptian* Magicians had deſtroyed the power of *Moſes*, and brought all the *miraculous evils* upon the *Iſraelites*, as enemies of the *Egyptian* Gods, which he brought upon them; what conſequence muſt *Reaſon* have drawn from ſuch an event? Could *Reaſon* have proved, that the God that made

made the world was *one* God, and that he alone ought to be worſhipped ? Or that the *Egyptians* ought to have left their Gods, who had the *whole Creation* in their hands in ſuch a manner, as to change the nature of things as they pleaſed, and deſtroy every power that oppoſed them.

Now, either the caſe here ſuppoſed is poſſible, or it is impoſſible. If it be poſſible, then all the reaſons for worſhipping the *one true God*, taken from the *nature* and *ſtate* of the creation, may entirely ceaſe, and be ſo many reaſons for idolatrous worſhip. For no one can have any reaſons for worſhipping the one true God, from the nature and ſtate of the Creation, if other Gods have the greateſt power over it, and can turn every thing into a *plague* upon thoſe that do not worſhip them.

But

But if this caſe be impoſſible, then it neceſſarily follows, that Miracles, *as ſuch*, and conſidered *in themſelves*, may be certain and infallible proofs of God's interpoſition. For this caſe can only be impoſſible, becauſe the greateſt, plaineſt Miracles cannot poſſibly be on the ſide of error. But if this cannot be, then the greateſt, plaineſt Miracles, *as ſuch*, and conſidered *in themſelves*, are an infallible mark of truth.

And he that abides by Miracles in ſuch circumſtances, as proofs of the operation of the *one true* God, has the ſame certainty of proceeding right, as he that takes the ſtate and nature of the Creation to be the effect of the one true God.

And as Miracles, thus conſidered in themſelves, are the higheſt and moſt undeniable

undeniable evidence of the truth and divinity of any Revelation; ſo Chriſtianity ſtands fully diſtinguiſhed from all other religions, by the higheſt and moſt undeniable evidence; ſince it has all the proof that the *higheſt ſtate* of Miracles can give, and every other religion is without any ſupport from them.

Thus I have, from a conſideration of the ſtate and condition of man, and the ſeveral relations which God ſtands in towards his creatures, ſhewn, that it is utterly impoſſible for human Reaſon to be a competent judge of the fitneſs, or unfitneſs, of all that God may, or may not, require of us. The two following chapters ſhall ſtate the nature and perfection of Reaſon, conſidered in itſelf, or as it is a faculty, or principle of action in human nature.

CHAP. IV.

Of the ſtate and nature of REASON, as it is in man; and how its perfection in matters of Religion is to be known.

PEOPLE, who take to themſelves the names of *Free-thinkers*, make their court to the world, by pretending to vindicate the right that all men have, to judge and act according to their own Reaſon. Though, I think, the world have no more to thank them for on this account, than if they had pretended to aſſert the right that every man has, to ſee *only* with his *own eyes*, or to hear *only* with his *own ears*.

For

For their own Reaſon always did, does, and ever will, govern rational creatures, in every thing they determine, either in ſpeculation or practice. It is not a matter of *duty* for men to uſe their own Reaſon, but of *neceſſity:* and it is as impoſſible to do otherwiſe, as for a Being, that cannot act but from choice, to act without choice. And if a man were to try not to act according to his own Reaſon or Choice, he would find himſelf under the ſame difficulty, as he that tries to think, without thinking upon ſomething.

And if God were to command us, by freſh revelations, every day of our lives, not to act from a principle of Reaſon and Choice, ſuch revelations could have no more effect upon us, than if they came from the weakeſt amongſt mankind. For, as our principle of acting is

not

not derived from ourſelves, ſo it is no more in our power to alter it, or contradict it, than it is in the power of matter not to *gravitate*, or to exiſt, without taking up ſome *place*.

Man is under the ſame neceſſity of acting from his own choice, that *matter* is of not acting at all: and a being, whoſe principle of action is Reaſon and Choice, can no more act without it, or contrary to it, than an extended being can be without extenſion.

All men, therefore, are equally reaſonable in this reſpect, that they are, and muſt be, by a *neceſſity* of nature, equally directed and governed by their own Reaſon and Choice.

For, as the principle of action, in human nature, is *Reaſon* and *Choice*, and nothing can be done, or believed, but for

ſome reaſon, any more than a thing can be choſen and not be choſen; ſo the acting according to one's own Reaſon, is not the privilege of the *Philoſopher*, but eſſential to human nature; and as inſeparable from all perſons, as ſelf-conſciouſneſs, or a ſenſe of their own exiſtence.

The diſpute, therefore, betwixt *Chriſtians* and *Unbelievers*, concerning Reaſon, is not, whether men are to uſe their *own Reaſon*, any more, than whether they are to ſee with their *own eyes*; but whether every man's Reaſon muſt needs guide him by its *own light*, or muſt ceaſe to guide him, as ſoon as it guides him by a light borrowed from Revelation? This is the true ſtate of the queſtion; not *whether* Reaſon is to be followed, but when it is *beſt* followed? not whether it

is

is to be our *Guide*, but how it may be made our *ſafeſt guide*.

The *Free-thinkers*, therefore, rather appeal to the Paſſions, than the Reaſon of the people, when they repreſent the Clergy and Chriſtianity as enemies to Reaſon, and juſt thinking, and themſelves as friends and advocates for the uſe of Reaſon.

For, Chriſtians pretend to no guide, but under the guidance of their Reaſon; nor to aſſert any thing, but becauſe it cannot be reaſonably denied. They oppoſe unbelievers, not becauſe they *reaſon*, but becauſe reaſon *ill*. They receive Revelation, not to ſuppreſs the power, but to improve the light of their Reaſon; not to take away their right of judging for themſelves, but to ſecure them from falſe Judgments: and what-

ever is required to be believed, or practiſed, by Revelation, is only ſo far required, as there is reaſon for it; or, becauſe it is more reaſonable than the contrary.

If, therefore, a poor peaſant ſhould call upon our Free-thinkers, to lay aſide their *bigotry* to *ideas*, *arguments*, and *philoſophy*, and govern themſelves by Reaſon; it would be no more abſurd, than for them to exhort Chriſtians to lay aſide their bigotry to *creeds* and *doctrines* of Revelation, and to govern themſelves by Reaſon.

For it may as well be affirmed, that a man departs from the uſe of his Reaſon, becauſe he depends upon *ideas*, *arguments*, and *ſyllogiſms*; as that he departs from the uſe of his Reaſon, becauſe he proceeds

proceeds upon *Prophecies*, *Miracles*, and *Revelations*.

And if he uſe his Reaſon weakly, and be ſubject to deluſion in theſe points, he no more renounces his Reaſon, or goes over to another direction, than *Hobbes*, *Spinoſa*, *Bayle*, *Collins*, or *Toland*, renounce their Reaſon, when they take their own *fancies* to be demonſtrations.

Chriſtians, therefore, do not differ from unbelievers, in the conſtant uſe of their Reaſon, but in *the manner* of uſing it: as *virtuous* men differ from *Rakes*, not in their deſire of happineſs, but in their manner of ſeeking it.

It appears from what has been ſaid, that, Every man's own Reaſon is his only principle of action; and that he muſt judge according to it, whether he receives, or rejects, Revelation.

Now,

Now, although every man is to judge according to the light of his own Reaſon, yet his Reaſon has very little light that can be called *its own*. For, as we derive our nature from our parents, ſo that which we call generally *natural knowledge*, or the light of *nature*, is a knowledge and light that is made natural to us, by the *ſame authority* which makes a certain *language*, certain *cuſtoms*, and *modes* of behaviour, natural to us.

Nothing ſeems to be our own, but a *bare capacity* to be inſtructed, a nature *fitted* for any impreſſions; as capable of vice as virtue; as ready to be made a vicious animal, as a religious rational creature; as liable to be made a *Hottentot*, by being born among Hottentots, as to be a *Chriſtian*, by being born among Chriſtians.

So

So that our moral and religious knowledge is not to be imputed to the internal light of our *own Reaſon* and *Nature*, but to the happineſs of having been born amongſt reaſonable beings, who have made a ſenſe of religion and morality as natural to our minds, as *articulate language* to our tongues.

It is not my intention by this, to ſignify that there is not a *good* and *evil*, *right* and *wrong*, founded in the nature of things; or that morality has any dependance upon the *opinions* or *cuſtoms* of men; but only to ſhew, that we *find* out this right and wrong, come to a *ſenſe* of this good and evil, not by any inward ſtrength, or light, that nature of itſelf affords, but by ſuch *external means*, as people are taught *articulate* language, *civility*,

civility, *politeneſs*, or any other *rules* of civil life.

Men do not prefer virtue to vice, from a philoſophical contemplation of the fitneſs of the one, and the unfitneſs of the other, founded in the nature of things; but becauſe it is a judgment as *early* in their minds, as their knowledge of the words, Virtue and Vice.

And it can no more be reaſonably affirmed, that our knowledge of God and divine things, our opinions in morality, of the excellency of this or that virtue, of the immortality of our ſouls, of a future life, of rewards and puniſhments, are the effects of our natural light; than it can be reaſonably affirmed, that our living in *ſociety*, our *articulate* language, and *erect poſture*, are owing to the light of nature.

For,

For, as all mankind find themſelves in this ſtate, before any reaſoning about it; as *education*, and *human authority* have ſet our bodies *upright*, taught us *language*, and accuſtomed us to the *rules* and *manners* of a ſocial life; ſo *education*, and the *ſame human* authority, have impreſſed and planted in our minds, certain notions of God and divine things, and formed us to a ſenſe of good and evil, a belief of our ſoul's immortality, and the expectation of another life.

And mankind are no more left to find out a God, or the fitneſs of moral virtue, by their own Reaſon, than they are left by their own Reaſon to find out who are their parents, or to find out the fitneſs of ſpeaking an articulate language, or the reaſonableneſs of living in ſociety.

On the contrary; we know that our manner

manner of coming into the world ſubjects us, without any choice, to the *language*, *ſentiments*, *opinions*, and *manners* of thoſe amongſt whom we are born. And though, when we come to any ſtrength or art of reaſoning, or have a *genius* for philoſophick enquires, we may thence deduce proofs of the *Being* and *Attributes* of God, the *Reaſonableneſs* of religion and morality, the *Nature* of our ſouls, and the *Certainty* of a future ſtate, and find that the opinions and tradition of mankind, concerning theſe things, are well founded; yet theſe are an *after-knowledge*, not common to men, but accidental confirmations of that knowledge and belief of a God, Religion, and Morality, which were before fixed in us more or leſs, by education, and the

authority of thoſe amongſt whom we have lived.

And as no *Philoſopher* ever proved the *fitneſs* of human nature for a *ſocial* life, from principles of reaſon and ſpeculation, who had not *firſt* been taught the nature and advantage of Society *another way*; ſo no one ever pretended to prove the Being and attributes of God, or the excellency of moral Virtue, who had not *firſt* been taught the knowledge of God and moral virtue ſome *other way*.

Now, if this be the ſtate of Reaſon, as it is in man; if this be all the light that we have from our *own nature*, a *bare capacity* of receiving good or bad impreſſions, right or wrong opinions and ſentiments, according to the ſtate of the world that we fall into; then we are but poorly furniſhed

furniſhed, to aſſert and maintain the *abſolute perfection* of our own Reaſon.

If our light be little more than the opinions and cuſtoms of thoſe amongſt whom we live, and it be ſo hard for a man to arrive at a greater wiſdom, than the common wiſdom of the *place* or *country* which gave him birth and education; how unreaſonably do we appeal to the perfection and ſufficiency of our own Reaſon, againſt the *neceſſity* and *advantage* of divine Revelation?

If we be *nothing* without the aſſiſtance of men; if we be a kind of fooliſh, helpleſs animals, till education and experience have *revealed* to us the wiſdom and knowledge of our fellow-creatures; ſhall we think ourſelves too wiſe, and full of our own light, to be farther enlightened

lightened with a knowledge and wiſdom revealed to us by God himſelf?

May one not therefore juſtly wonder, what it is that could lead any people into an imagination of the abſolute perfection of *human Reaſon?* There ſeems no more in the ſtate of mankind to betray a man into this fancy, than to perſuade him that the reaſon of *Infants* is abſolutely perfect. For ſenſe and experience are as full and ſtrong a proof againſt one, as againſt the other.

But it muſt be ſaid for theſe writers, that they decline all arguments from facts and experience, to give a better account of human nature; but with the ſame juſtice, as if a man were to lay aſide the authority of *hiſtory*, to give you a truer account of the life of *Alexander*.

They

They argue about the perfection of human Reaſon, not as if it were ſomething *already* in being, that had its na*ture* and *condition*, and ſhewed itſelf to be what it is; but as if it were ſomething that might take its ſtate and condition, according to their fancies and ſpeculations about it.

Their objection againſt Revelation is founded upon the pretended ſufficiency, and abſolute perfection, of the light and ſtrength of human Reaſon, to teach all men all that is wiſe, and holy, and divine, in Religion. But how do they *prove* this perfection of human Reaſon? Do they appeal to Mankind as proofs of this perfection? Do they produce any body of men, in this, or any other age of the world, that without any aſſiſtance

aſſiſtance from Revelation, have attained to this perfection of religious knowledge? This is not ſo much as pretended to: the hiſtory of ſuch men is entirely wanting. And yet the want of ſuch a fact as this, has even the force of demonſtration againſt this pretended ſufficiency of natural Reaſon.

Becauſe it is a matter not capable of any other kind of proof, but muſt be admitted as certainly true, or rejected as certainly falſe, according as fact and experience bear witneſs for or againſt it.

For an enquiry about the light, and ſtrength, and ſufficiency of Reaſon to guide and preſerve men in the knowledge and practice of true religion, is a queſtion, as *ſolely* to be reſolved by *fact and*

 experience,

experience, as if the enquiry was about the *ſhape* of man's body, or the *number* of his ſenſes. And to talk of a light and ſtrength of Reaſon, natural to man, which fact and experience have never yet proved, is as egregious nonſenſe, as to talk of natural ſenſes, or faculties of his body, which fact and experience have never yet diſcovered.

For, as the *exiſtence* of man cannot be proved, but from fact and experience; ſo every *quality* of man, whether of body or mind, and every degree of that quality, can only be proved by fact and experience.

The degrees of human *ſtrength*, the nature of human *paſſions*; the duration of human *life*, the light and ſtrength of human *Reaſon* in matters of religion, are things not poſſible to be known in any

other

other degree, than *ſo far* as fact and experience prove them.

From the bare conſideration of a rational ſoul in union with a body, and bodily paſſions, we can neither prove man to be *ſtrong* or *weak*, *good* or *bad*, *ſickly* or *ſound*, *mortal* or *immortal:* all theſe qualities muſt diſcover themſelves, as the *eye* diſcovers its degree of *ſight*, the *hand* its degree of *ſtrength*, &c.

To enquire therefore, whether men have, by nature, light and ſtrength ſufficient to guide, and keep them in the true religion? is the ſame appeal to fact and experience, as to require, whether men are *mortal*, *ſickly*, or *ſound*; or how far they can *ſee* and *hear*. For nothing that relates to human nature, as a quality of it, can poſſibly have any other proof.

If

If ſome other enquirers into human nature, ſhould affirm, that there is in mankind a *natural inſtinct* of mutual love *ſufficient* to make every man, at all times, love every other man, with the *ſame degree* of affection as he loves himſelf; I ſuppoſe ſuch an opinion would be thought too abſurd and extravagant, to need any confutation. And yet all the abſurdity of it would lie in this, that it affirmed ſomething of the *ſufficiency* of a natural quality in man, which could not be ſupported by a ſingle inſtance of any one man, and was contrary to the experience and hiſtory of every age of the world.

By what has been here ſaid, I hope the reader will obſerve, that this enquiry about the perfection or imperfection, the ſtrength or weakneſs of Reaſon in man, as to matters of religion, reſts

wholly

wholly upon fact and experience; and that therefore all ſpeculative reaſonings upon it are to be looked upon as idle and viſionary, as a ſick man's dreams about health; and as wholly to be rejected, as any ſpeculative arguments that ſhould pretend to prove, in ſpite of all facts and experience, the *immortality*, and *unalterable* ſtate of human bodies.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Shewing, that all the mutability *of our tempers, the* diſorders *of our paſſions, the* corruption *of our hearts, all the* reveries *of the imagination, all the* contradictions *and* abſurdities *that are to be found in human opinions, are ſtrictly, and preciſely the mutability, diſorders, corruption, and abſurdities of* human Reaſon.

IT is the intent of this chapter to ſhew, that although common language aſcribes a variety of faculties and principles to the ſoul, imputing this action to the blindneſs of our *paſſions*, that to the inconſtancy of our *tempers*; one thing to the heat

heat of our *imagination*, another to the coolneſs of our *reaſon*; yet, in ſtrictneſs of truth, every thing that is done by us is the action and operation of our Reaſon, and is to be aſcribed to it, as the ſole faculty or principle from whence it proceeded, and by which it is governed and effected.

Nobody denies, that there is a *Law* or *Light* of Reaſon common to men. All this is as freely granted, as that *love* and *hatred*, *feeling* and *ſenſation* are common to men; and is granting no more, than that men are by nature intelligent and rational Beings. For the faculties of man, as he is an intelligent being, as neceſſarily perceive ſome difference in actions, as to *good* and *bad*, as they perceive ſome things they like, and ſome things they diſlike. In this ſenſe, there

is

is a law, or light of Reaſon, common to all men; and the law of Reaſon is in men, as the law of *thinking*, of *liking*, and *diſliking* is in men.

And the different degrees of Reaſon are in men, as the different degrees of love and averſion; as the different degrees of wit, parts, good nature, or ill nature, are in man.

And as all men have naturally more or leſs of theſe qualities, ſo all men have naturally more or leſs of Reaſon: and the bulk of mankind are as different in Reaſon, as they are in theſe qualities.

As Love is the ſame paſſion in all men, yet is infinitely different; as Hatred is the ſame paſſion in all men, yet with infinite differences; ſo Reaſon is the ſame

ſame faculty in all men, yet with infinite differences.

And as our Paſſions not only make us different from other men, but frequently, and almoſt daily, different from ourſelves, loving and hating under great inconſtancy; ſo our Reaſon is not only different from the Reaſon of other men, but is often different from itſelf by a ſtrange inconſtancy, ſetting up firſt one opinion, and then another.

So that when we talk of *human Reaſon*, or a Reaſon *common* to mankind, we talk of as *various*, *uncertain*, and *unmeaſurable* a thing, as when we talk of a *love*, a *liking*, an *averſion*, a *good nature* or *ill nature*, common to mankind; for theſe qualities admit of no variation, uncertainty, or mutability, but ſuch as they

they directly receive from the *Reaſon* of mankind.

For it is as much the Reaſon of man that acts in all theſe tempers, and makes them to be juſt what they are, as it is the Reaſon of man that demonſtrates a mathematical propoſition.

Was our Reaſon ſteady, and of one kind, there would be juſt the ſame ſteadineſs and regularity in our tempers; did not Reaſon fall into miſtakes, follies and abſurdities, we ſhould have nothing fooliſh or abſurd in our love or averſion. For every humour, every kind of love or averſion, is as ſtrictly the *action* or *operation* of our Reaſon, as judgment is the act of our Reaſon.

And the tempers and paſſions of a child differ only from the tempers and paſſions

paſſions of a man, exactly in the ſame degree, as the Reaſon of a child differs from the Reaſon of man.

So that our paſſions and tempers are the natural actions and real effects of our Reaſon, and have no qualities, either good or bad, but ſuch as are to be imputed to it.

A laudable good nature, or a laudable averſion, is only Reaſon acting in a *certain manner;* a criminal good nature, or a criminal averſion, is nothing elſe, but an ill-judging Reaſon; that is, Reaſon acting in another certain manner.

But ſtill it is Reaſon, or our underſtanding, that is the *only agent* in our bad paſſions, as well as good paſſions; and as much the *ſole agent* in all our paſſions and tempers, as in things of mere ſpeculation.

So that the ſtate of Reaſon in human life, is nothing elſe but the ſtate of human tempers and paſſions; and *right Reaſon* in morality, is nothing elſe but *right love* and *right averſion.*

And all our tempers and ways of liking and diſliking, are as much the acts and operations of our Reaſon, as the wiſeſt actions of our life; and they only differ from Reaſon, as Reaſon differs from itſelf, when it judges rightly, and when it judges erroneouſly.

All that therefore, which we commonly call the weakneſs, blindneſs, and diſorder of our *paſſions*, is in reality the weakneſs, blindneſs, and diſorder of our *Reaſon.* For a right love, or wrong love, denotes only our Reaſon acting in a *certain particular manner.*

So

So that if any thing can be ſaid preciſely, or with exactneſs, of love, averſion, good nature or ill nature, as common to mankind; the ſame may be ſaid of Reaſon, as common to mankind.

And, if it would be very fooliſh and abſurd, to aſcribe an abſolute perfection to human love, making it alone a ſufficient guide to all good; or an abſolute perfection to human hatred, as a ſufficient preſervative from all vice; it is equally abſurd to aſcribe the ſame perfection to human Reaſon: becauſe neither love nor hatred have any thing perfect or imperfect, good or bad in them, but what is ſolely the action and operation of Reaſon.

For the diſtinction of our Reaſon from our Paſſions, is only a diſtinction in

language, made at pleaſure; and is no more real in the things themſelves, than the *deſire* and *inclination* are really different from the *Will*. All therefore that is weak and fooliſh in our paſſions, is the weakneſs and folly of our Reaſon; all the inconſtancy and caprice of our humours and tempers, is the caprice and inconſtancy of our Reaſon.

It is not *Flattery*, that compliments vice in authority; it is not *Corruption*, that makes men proſtitute their honour; it is not *Senſuality*, that plunges men into *Debauchery*; it is not *Avarice*, that makes men ſordid; it is not *Ambition*, that makes them reſtleſs; it is not *Bribery*, that makes men ſell their conſciences; it is not *Intereſt*, that makes them lie and cheat, and perjure themſelves. What is

is it therefore? Why, it is *Reaſon*, the *uſe of Reaſon*, *human Reaſon*, that does all this.

To ſuppoſe that Reaſon permits itſelf to be governed by paſſions or tempers, but is not the *immediate*, *full agent* of all that is done by them, is as abſurd, as to ſuppoſe that Reaſon permits itſelf to be governed by the *hand* when it is writing falſely, or the *tongue* when it is talking profanely, but is not the immediate, direct agent of all that is written and ſpoken by them.

Brutes are incapable of imprudence and immorality, becauſe none of their actions are the actions of *Reaſon:* every thing therefore that is imprudence, immorality, baſeneſs, or villany in us, muſt be the act of our Reaſon; otherwiſe it could

could no more be imprudent or immoral, than the actions of brutes.

If, therefore, Reaſon be the only faculty that diſtinguiſheth us from brutes; it neceſſarily follows, that thoſe irregularities, whether of humour, paſſions, or tempers, which cannot be imputed to brutes, muſt be ſolely attributed to that faculty by which we are diſtinguiſhed from brutes; and conſequently, every thing that is fooliſh, vain, ſhameful, falſe, treacherous, and baſe, muſt be the ſole expreſs acts of our Reaſon; ſince, if they were the acts of any thing elſe, they could have no more vanity, falſhood, or baſeneſs, than hunger and thirſt.

As therefore all that is faithful, juſt, and wiſe, can only be attributed to that

which

which is done by our Reaſon; ſo, by plain conſequence, all that is vain, falſe, or ſhameful, can only be imputed to any acts, as they are the acts of Reaſon.

It is not my intent in the leaſt to cenſure or condemn our common language, which conſiders and talks of Reaſon and the Paſſions, as if they were as different as a *governor* and his *ſubjects*.

Theſe forms of ſpeech are very intelligible and uſeful, and give great life and ornament to all diſcourſes upon morality; and are even neceſſary both for the Hiſtorian, the Poet, and the Orator.

But, when certain perſons aſcribe to human Reaſon, as a *diſtinct faculty* of human nature, I know not what *perfection*, it is neceſſary to conſider human Reaſon and human Nature, not as it is repre-

repreſented in common language, but as it is in reality in itſelf.

Notwithſtanding, therefore, in common language, our Paſſions, and the effects of them, are very uſefully diſtinguiſhed from our Reaſon, I have here ventured to ſhew, that all the diſorders of human nature, are preciſely the diſorders of human Reaſon; and that all the perfection or imperfection of our paſſions, is nothing elſe but the perfection or imperfection of our Reaſon.

And we may as well think, that judgment, prudence, diſcretion, are things different from our Reaſon, as that humour, temper, approbation, or averſion, are really different from our Reaſon.

For, as it is a right exerciſe of Reaſon, that denominates its actions to be *Prudence*, *Judgment*, and *Diſcretion*; ſo it is

is a wrong exercise of Reason, that denominates its actions to be *Humour*, *Temper*, and *Caprice*.

And it would be as absurd to condemn humour and caprice, if they were not the actions and operations of Reason, as to commend a prudence and discretion, that were the effects of an irrational principle.

Our follies, therefore, and absurdities of every kind, are as necessarily to be ascribed to our Reason, as the *first*, *immediate*, and *sole* Cause of them, as our wisdom and discretion are to be ascribed to it in that degree.

The difference betwixt Reason assenting to the properties of a *square*, and Reason acting in motions of *desire* or *aversion*, is only this, that in the latter case it is Reason, acting under a sense of

good

good or *evil*, in the former caſe, it is Reaſon acting under a ſenſe of *magnitude*.

And as the relations of magnitude, as they are the objects of our Reaſon, are only the objects of its *aſſent* or *diſſent*; ſo good and evil, as they are objects of our Reaſon, are only the objects of its *deſire* or *averſion*: and as the aſſent or diſſent, in matters of ſpeculation, whether right or wrong, is ſolely the act of our Reaſon; ſo deſire or averſion, in human life, whether right or wrong, is equally the act of our Reaſon.

All the good, therefore, that there is in any of our deſires or averſions, is the good of our Reaſon; and all the evil or blindneſs there is in any of our paſſions, is ſolely the evil and blindneſs of our Reaſon.

Becauſe

Becauſe love, deſire, averſion, denote nothing elſe but our Reaſon acting in a certain manner; juſt as prudence, diſcretion, and judgment, denote nothing elſe but our Reaſon acting in a certain manner.

We often ſay, that our Paſſions deceive us, or perſuade us; but this is no more ſtrictly ſo, than when we ſay, our *intereſt* deceived, or a *bribe* blinded us. For bribes and intereſt are not active principles, nor have any power of deception; it is only our Reaſon that gives them a falſe value, and prefers them to a greater good.

It is juſt ſo, in what we call the deceit of our Paſſions: they meddle with us no more than bribes meddle with us; but that pleaſurable perception, which is to be found in certain enjoyments, is by our

our Reaſon preferred to that better good, which we might expect from a ſelf-denial.

We ſay again, that our Paſſions paint things in falſe colours, and preſent to our minds vain appearances of happineſs.

But this is no more ſtrictly true, than when we ſay, our *Imagination* forms caſtles in the air. For the imagination ſignifies no diſtinct faculty from our Reaſon, but only, Reaſon acting upon our *own ideas*.

So, when our Paſſions are ſaid to give falſe colours to things, or preſent vain appearances of happineſs, it is only our Reaſon acting upon its own ideas of *good* and *evil*, juſt as it acts upon its own ideas of *architecture*, in forming caſtles in the air.

So that, all that which we call different faculties of the ſoul, tempers and paſſions

of

of the heart, ſtrictly ſpeaking, means nothing elſe but the various acts and operations of one and the ſame rational principle; which has different names, according to *the objects* which it acts upon, and *the manner* of its acting.

In ſome things it is called ſpeculative, in others it is called practical Reaſon. And we may as juſtly think our ſpeculative Reaſon is a different faculty from our practical Reaſon, as that our tempers, averſions, or likings, are not as fully and ſolely to be aſcribed to our Reaſon, as ſyllogiſms and demonſtrations.

For, it is our Reaſon alone that chuſes the true good; ſo it is our Reaſon alone that chuſes the falſe good: as it is Reaſon alone that is the agent, when purity and integrity are preferred to ſenſual pleaſure, and ſecular advantage; ſo it is

our Reaſon alone that is the agent, when ſenſual pleaſure, and ſecular advantage, are preferred to purity and integrity.

For the ſame Principle, which is the agent of all that is good in us, muſt be equally the agent of all that is evil.

All virtue is nothing elſe, but Reaſon acting in a certain manner; and all vice is nothing elſe, but Reaſon acting in a certain contrary manner. All the difference is in the actions, and none at all in the agent.

And to ſay, that Reaſon acts in our virtues, and Paſſion acts in our vices, is as abſurd, as to ſay the contrary, that Paſſion is the agent in our virtues, and Reaſon the agent in our vices. For the action or power of Reaſon is as much required to make any thing vicious, as to make any thing virtuous.

Every

Every thing therefore that is choſen, whether it be good or bad, is the expreſs act and operation of Reaſon.

Reaſon therefore is certainly the worſt, as well as the beſt faculty that we have: as it is the only principle of virtue, ſo it is, as certainly, the ſole cauſe of all that is baſe, horrid, and ſhameful in human life. As it alone can diſcover truth, ſo it alone leads us into the groſſeſt errors.

It was as truly Reaſon that made *Medea* kill her children, that made *Cato* kill himſelf, that made pagans offer human ſacrifices to idols; that made *Epicurus* deny a providence, *Mahomet* pretend a revelation; that made ſome men ſcepticks, others bigots; ſome enthuſiaſts, others profane; that made *Hobbes* aſſert all religion to be human invention, and *Spinoſa* to declare trees, and ſtones, and

animals, to be parts of God; that makes Free-thinkers deny freedom of will, and Fataliſts exhort to a reformation of manners; that made *Vaux* a conſpirator, and *Ludlow* a regicide; that made *Muggleton* a fanatic, and *Rocheſter* a libertine: it was as truly human Reaſon that did all theſe things, as it is human Reaſon that demonſtrates mathematical propoſitions.

For as all miſtakes in ſpeculation are as much the acts and operation of Reaſon, as true concluſions; ſo all errors in duty, whether civil or religious, are as much the acts of our Reaſon, as the exerciſe of the moſt ſolid virtues.

Medea and *Cato* acted as truly according to the judgment of their Reaſon, at that time, as the *Confeſſor* that chuſes

chuſes rather to ſuffer, than deny his faith.

And the difference betwixt them does not conſiſt in this, that one power or faculty of the mind, acted in one of them, and another faculty, or power of the mind, acted in another; that is, that Reaſon acted in one, and Paſſion in another; but purely in the different *ſtate* of their Reaſon. For had not *Medea* and *Cato* thought it beſt to do what they did, at the time they did it, they would no more have done it, than the *Confeſſor* would chuſe to ſuffer rather than deny his faith, unleſs he had judged it beſt ſo to do.

It may indeed be well enough ſaid in common language, that Paſſion made *Medea* and *Cato* to do as they did, juſt as it may be ſaid of a man that affirms a

plenum,

plenum, or holds any ſpeculative abſurdity, that it is blindneſs or prejudice that keeps him in it. Not as if blindneſs or prejudice were powers or faculties of his mind, but as they ſignify the *ill ſtate* of his Reaſon. Juſt ſo the paſſions may be ſaid to govern men in their actions; not as if they were powers of the mind, but as they denote the diſordered ſtate of Reaſon. And whenever any thing is imputed to the ſtrength and violence of our Paſſions, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it only means the weakneſs and low condition of our Reaſon at that time.

For Reaſon governs as fully when our actions and tempers are ever ſo bad, as it does when our actions and tempers are ſound and good. And the only difference

rence is, that Reaſon acting well, governs in the one caſe, and Reaſon acting ill, governs in the other.

Juſt as it is the ſame Reaſon, that ſometimes judges ſtrictly right, which at other times judges exceeding wrong, in matters of ſpeculation.

When therefore we ſay, that Reaſon governs the paſſions, it means no more, in ſtrict truth, than that Reaſon governs itſelf; that it acts with deliberation and attention; does not yield to its firſt judgments or opinions, but uſes ſecond, and third thoughts.

So that, guarding againſt the Paſſions, is only guarding againſt its own firſt judgments and opinions; that is, guarding againſt itſelf.

To all this it may, perhaps, be objected, that our paſſions and tempers ariſe from

from bodily motions, and depend very much upon the ſtate of our blood and animal ſpirits; and that, therefore, what we do under their commotions, cannot be attributed to our Reaſon.

It is readily granted, that the body has this ſhare in our paſſions and tempers: but then the ſame thing muſt be granted of the body, in all the acts and operations of the mind. So that if our deſires and averſions cannot be imputed to our Reaſon, as its acts, becauſe of the joint operation of the animal ſpirits in them; no more can ſyllogiſms and demonſtrations be attributed to our Reaſon as its operations, becauſe the operation of bodily ſpirits concurreth in the forming of them.

For the moſt abſtract thought, and calm ſpeculation of the mind, has as truly

truly the *concurrence*, and *conjunct* operation of bodily ſpirits, as our ſtrongeſt deſires or averſions. And it is as much owing to the ſtate of the body that ſuch ſpeculations are what they are, as it is owing to the ſtate of the body that ſuch paſſions are what they are.

For the motions of the bodily ſpirits are inſeparable from, and according to, the ſtate and action of the mind: when Reaſon is in ſpeculation of a trifle, they concur but *weakly*; when Reaſon ſpeculates intenſely, their operation is *increaſed*. And ſometimes the attention of the mind is ſo great, and has ſo engaged and called in all the animal ſpirits to its aſſiſtance, that the operations of our ſenſes are ſuſpended, and we neither ſee nor feel, till the attention of the

the mind has let the ſpirits return to all parts of the body.

Now, will any one ſay, that theſe intenſe thoughts are leſs the acts of the mind, becauſe they have a greater concurrence of bodily ſpirits than when it is acting with indifference, and ſo has a leſſer quantity of bodily ſpirits?

Yet this might as well be ſaid, as to ſay, that the aſſent or diſſent, in ſpeculation, is the act of our Reaſon; but liking or diſliking, loving or hating, are not ſo the acts of our Reaſon, becauſe they have a greater concurrence, and different motions of bodily ſpirits.

For, as the mind is in a different ſtate when it deſires good, or fears evil, from what it is when it only compares two triangles; ſo the motions or concurrence of the bodily ſpirits have only *ſuch* a difference

ference as is ſtrictly *correſpondent* to theſe two ſtates of the mind. They act and join as much in comparing the triangles, as in the deſire of good, or fear of evil. And the mind is juſt ſo much governed by the body, in its paſſions, as it is governed by it in its calmeſt contemplations.

For as the gentle quiet operation of the animal ſpirits is then ſtrictly correſpondent, and entirely owing to the ſtate and action of the mind; ſo in all our paſſions, the ſtrong and increaſed motion of the animal ſpirits is then ſtrictly correſpondent, and entirely owing to the ſtate and action of the mind.

So that Reaſon is neither more nor leſs the agent in all our tempers and paſſions, than it is in our moſt dry and ſedate ſpeculations.

It may, and often does happen, that a man may have as great an eagerneſs and impatience in the ſolving a mathematical problem, as another hath to obtain any great good, or avoid any great evil.

But may it therefore be ſaid, that it is not Reaſon that ſolves, or deſires to ſolve, the problem, becauſe the bodily ſpirits are ſo active in it?

In a word; if our paſſions and tempers might not be imputed to our Reaſon, as its own genuine acts and operations, becauſe they have ſuch a concurrence of bodily ſpirits, neither could arguing, or reaſoning, be attributed to our *Reaſon*, as its proper act and operation, becauſe in all argumentation the bodily ſpirits are neceſſarily employed; and the better and cloſer the reaſoning is, the more they are excited and employed.

If

If it ſhould farther be objected, that Reaſon is only *right Reaſon*, and therefore cannot be ſaid to act or operate, but where, and ſo far, as right Reaſon acts.

This is as abſurd as to ſay, that *Love* ſignifies only *pure love*, and *Hatred* juſt hatred; and that therefore a man cannot be ſaid to love or hate, but when, and ſo far, as his love is pure, and his hatred juſt.—

To draw now ſome plain conſequences from the foregoing account.

Firſt, If Reaſon be, as above repreſented, the *univerſal Agent*; if all the difference amongſt men, either in ſpeculation or practice, be only ſuch a difference as Reaſon makes, then nothing can be more extravagant, than to affirm any thing concerning the degree of perfection

fection or imperfection of Reaſon, as common to man. It is as wild and romantic, as to pretend to ſtate the meaſure of Folly and Wiſdom, of Fear and Courage, of Pride and Humility, of good Humour and ill Humour, common to Mankind: for as theſe ſtates of the Mind are only ſo many different ſtates of Reaſon, ſo no uncertainty belongs to them, but what, in the *ſame degree*, belongs to *Reaſon*.

Secondly, Granting that all matters of Religion muſt be agreeable to *right*, *unprejudiced* Reaſon; yet this could be no ground for receiving nothing in religion, but what *human* Reaſon could prove to be neceſſary: for *human* Reaſon is no more *right unprejudiced* Reaſon,

Reaſon, than a ſinner is *ſinleſs*, or a man an *angel*.

Granting again, that a man may go a great way towards rectifying his Reaſon, and laying aſide its prejudices; yet no particular man can be a *better judge* of the rectitude of his *own Reaſon*, than he is of the rectitude of his own *ſelf-love*, the ſagacity of his own *underſtanding*, the brightneſs of his own *parts*, the juſtneſs of his own *eloquence*, and the depth of his own *judgment*.

For there is nothing to deceive him in *ſelf-love*, in the opinion of his *own merit*, *wit*, *judgment* and *eloquence*, but what has the ſame power to deceive him, in the opinion of his own Reaſon. And, if *it be the fate of moſt ſects to be fondeſt of their ugliеſt brats*, none ſeem ſo inevitably expoſed to this *fatality*, as thoſe, whoſe Religion is to

have no *form*, but ſuch as it receives from their own hearts.

Thirdly, A man that has his Religion to chuſe, and with this previous privilege, that he need not allow any thing to be matter of religion, but what his own Reaſon can prove to be ſo, is in as fair a way to be governed by his *Paſſions*, as he that has his *condition* of life to chuſe, with the liberty of taking that, which his own Reaſon directs him to.

Does any one ſuppoſe now, that nothing but *right Reaſon* would direct him in the choice of his condition? Or that he would make the better choice, becauſe he proceeded upon this maxim, that nothing could be right, but that which was agreeable to his *own Reaſon?* Or that his temper, his prejudices, his ſelf-love, his paſſions,

paſſions, his partiality, would have no influence upon his choice, becauſe he had reſigned himſelf up to his *own Reaſon.*

For as our choice of a condition of life is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of good and evil; ſo however it is recommended to our Reaſon, it chiefly excites our paſſions; and our choice will be juſt as reaſonable, as our tempers and paſſions are. And he, who is made the moſt poſitive of the ſufficiency of his own Reaſon, will be the moſt likely to be governed by the blindneſs of his own Paſſions.

Now it is juſt the ſame in the choice of a Religion, as in the choice of a condition of life: as it is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of *good* and *evil*; ſo, if it

it be left to be ſtated and determined by our *own Reaſon*, it rather appeals to our Tempers, than employs our Reaſon; and to reſign ourſelves up to our own Reaſon, to tell us what ought or not to be a matter of Religion, is only reſigning ourſelves up to our Tempers to take what we *like*, and refuſe what we *diſlike* in Religion.

For, it is not only natural and eaſy for him, who believes that nothing can be a part of Religion, but what his Reaſon can prove neceſſary to be ſo, to take that to be *fully proved*, which is only *mightily liked*; and all that to be entirely contrary to *Reaſon*, which is only vaſtly contrary to his *Tempers*; this, I ſay, is not only natural and eaſy to happen, but ſcarce poſſible to be avoided.

In

In a word; when *Self-love* is a proper arbitrator betwixt a man and his adverſary; when *Revenge* is a juſt judge of Meekneſs; when *Pride* is a true lover of Humility; when *Falſhood* is a teacher of Truth; when *Luſt* is a faſt friend of Chaſtity; when the *Fleſh* leads to the Spirit; when *Senſuality* delights in Self-denial; when *Partiality* is a promoter of Equity; when the *Palate* can taſte the difference between Sin and Holineſs; when the *Hand* can feel the truth of a Propoſition, then may *human Reaſon* be a proper Arbitrator between God and Man; the ſole, final, juſt Judge of all that ought, or ought not to be matter of a *Holy*, *Divine*, and *Heavenly* Religion.—

Again: if this be the ſtate of Reaſon, as has been fully proved; if all we be-

lieve or diſbelieve, love or hate, chuſe or refuſe; if all that is wiſe or abſurd, holy or profane, glorious or ſhameful, in thought, word, or deed, be to be imputed to it; then, it is as groſs an abſurdity to talk of the perfection of *human Reaſon*, as, of the unſpotted holineſs of *human Life*, the abſolute purity of *human Love*, the immutable juſtice of *human Hatred*, and the infallibility of *human Conjectures*.

Laſtly, To pretend that our Reaſon is too perfect to be governed by any thing but its own light, is the ſame extravagance, as to pretend, that our love is *too pure* to be governed by any thing but its own inclinations, our hatred *too juſt* to be governed by any thing but its own motions. For, if all that is baſe and criminal in love, all that is unjuſt and

and wicked in hatred, be ſtrictly and ſolely to be imputed to our Reaſon; then, no perfection can be aſcribed to our Reaſon, but ſuch as is to be aſcribed to our love and hatred.

FINIS.

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